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ABSTRACT

This report examines both the impact of Operation Desert Shield/Storm on the families of active duty service members who were deployed to the Persian Gulf region, and the effectiveness of the Air Force's family support systems in meeting family and mission needs. The Air Force's Family Matters Office sponsored this study in order to identify the lessons learned during the Gulf War and to enhance the readiness of Air Force families and agencies for future large-scale mobilizations. Researchers collected information from a variety of sources, including: (1) telephone interviews with single parents, dual-military couples, and civilian spouses; (2) on-site focus groups with active duty personnel, civilian spouses, youth, single parents, and dual military couples; and (3) interviews with service providers and unit leadership. Specific questions addressed in the study include: (1) How well were families prepared for the deployment? (2) What types of problems did families experience most frequently? (3) What formal and informal support systems were most likely to be used by families? and (4) What problems were experienced during the reunion phase? The analysis is presented in four chapters: (1) a literature review on family separation issues; (2) the methodology employed in the study; (3) the results of the analyses; and (4) the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Future phases of the study will include a workshop with Air Force policy-makers, follow-up interviews with single parents and dual-military couples, and the conclusion of a comparable study with Reserve Component service members, spouses, leadership and service providers. (RJM)

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ED 373 293

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN THE AIR FORCE DURING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/STORM

FINAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS DURING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/STORM

This report examines the impact of Operation Desert Shield/Storm on the families of active duty servicemembers who were deployed to the Persian Gulf region, as well as the effectiveness of the Air Force's family support systems in meeting both family and mission needs. The study is being sponsored by the Air Force Family Matters Office in order to identify the lessons learned during the deployment and facilitate the development of practical strategies to enhance the readiness of Air Force families and agencies for future, large-scale mobilizations.

Over 50,000 Air Force servicemembers were deployed to the Persian Gulf; of this number, over 33,000 left spouses behind and over 14,000 left dependent children at home. This research focuses on family members' experiences, coping mechanisms and use of family support programs. Emphasis was placed on the experiences of single parents and dual-military couples with children who were deployed to the Persian Gulf, as well as civilian spouses and children. In addition, leadership was asked about the effect of families on the mission and the success of family programs in mediating problems. Similarly, service providers were asked about the problems and needs they responded to and how well their services met family needs.

Specific questions that are addressed in the study include:

- How well were families prepared for the deployment?
- How well did single parent and dual-military couple Family Care Plans work; what types of problems were experienced?
- What types of problems did families experience most frequently?
- How well did base service providers meet the needs of families?
- What formal and informal support systems were most likely to be used by families?
- What impact did the level of support provided by squadrons have on the stress experienced by families and servicemembers?

- What problems were experienced during the reunion phase?
- What impact did the deployment have on the servicemembers' commitment to the Air Force?

The data to answer these questions were gathered from a variety of sources, including: telephone interviews with single parents, dual-military couples and civilian spouses; on-site focus groups with active duty, civilian spouses, youth, single parents and dual-military couples; and interviews with service providers and unit leadership.

This report represents the conclusion of the first phase of activities in this study. The next phases include a workshop with Air Force policymakers, follow-up interviews with single parents and dual-military couples, and the conclusion of a comparable study with Reserve Component servicemembers, spouses, leadership and service providers.

The report is presented in four chapters. Chapter I presents a literature review on family separation issues, including recently completed research by the Army on Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Chapter II presents the methodology employed in the study, including data collection and data analysis methods. The results of the analyses are presented in Chapter III in three sections: Pre-deployment, During Deployment and Reunion. Chapter IV presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study, with special emphasis on the "lessons learned" and how they can be used by policymakers, service providers, and unit leadership.

I. FAMILY SEPARATION IN THE MILITARY

I. FAMILY SEPARATIONS IN THE MILITARY

Separations have always been a fact of life for military families. Virtually every servicemember spends time away from home during his or her Air Force career; and today most servicemembers -- 67% of all Air Force personnel -- are married (Defense 91).

Recent military events, such as Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989 and Desert Shield/Storm in 1990-91, have focused increased attention on deployment and family separation issues. Current military planning scenarios, which envision short notice deployment from the U.S. to conflicts around the globe, suggest that family separation issues will become even more inextricably linked to military operational issues. Clearly it is in both the Air Force's and the families' best interests to manage the separation process and experience effectively (Orthner & Bowen, 1990).

In this review of the separation literature, we summarize key findings from the considerable research on family separations published since Dr. Reuben Hill's "seminal" work on soldiers returning from World War II (Hill, 1945). Because the military traditionally has been composed primarily of male soldiers with civilian wives, most of the research has focused on how wives cope with the husband's absence, factors that affect their ability to cope, and on the readjustment problems that may occur after the separation. This body of knowledge formed a basis for the design and interpretation of our current research. Many of the problems caused by separation that Hill found during WWII were still relevant during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

This review is organized into seven sections, covering the various aspects of the separation experience and the Air Force's role in the process:

- Separations, the family and the Air Force
- Effects of separations on spouses
- Separations and children

- o Factors that affect the separation experience
- o Coping during separation
- o Reunion after separation
- o Air Force's role in providing family support during separations.

1. SEPARATIONS, THE FAMILY AND THE AIR FORCE

One of the features which distinguishes the military family from other kinds of families is the frequent and irregular absences of the servicemember from the home due to deployments (Lewis, 1984b). Family separations represent a major hurdle in adjusting to military life, and challenge the family's adaptive capability (Harrell and Rayhawk, 1985; Fentress 1987). Not all servicemembers view relocation and temporary duty assignments (TDY) negatively, as evidenced by the fact that some recruits list the opportunity to travel as a primary reason for initial enlistment (Pliske, et al., 1986). Jacobs and Hicks (1987) point out that responses to periodic separations are quite varied and that they are not necessarily a negative event. For many families, however, frequent moves and extended separations are disruptive and stressful. Ethridge (1989) cites research in which male Army officers reported that their wives viewed family separation, housing, and frequency of moves as the major sources of their dissatisfaction with the military. Teitlebaum (1988) classifies "deployment separation stress and reunion readjustment" as one of four major forms of military stress for families.

Military family separations require that the entire family adjust to the changes imposed by the absence of a parent, or in the case of dual-military families, both parents (Hunter and Hickman, 1981). Family and household routines are disrupted, often with little notice or time for preparation. Relationships are forced to change when the servicemember leaves, and are frequently expected to return to "normal" when the servicemember returns. The reunion of the servicemember and the family is often stressful. Additionally, not only is the family relationship itself affected by the separation, the family's relationship to the military is changed when the servicemember is removed from the intermediary position between the military and family (Lewis, 1984a).

There are several military situations that result in the servicemember being separated from the family. Among these are temporary duty assignments, training, field duty and exercises, and combat missions. Each type has associated levels of stress, from the inconvenient disruption of household routines due to short-term TDY or field duty, to the horror of war. Mission accomplishment also requires that service personnel tend isolated duty stations around the world. Family separations occur when married personnel rotate through these routine unaccompanied tours (usually overseas) or, even if the assignment is not unaccompanied, when family housing is not available (Hunter and Hickman, 1981).

Separations in the Air Force affect about half of all members with families in any 12 month period. For enlisted personnel, the average length of separation is 4.1 months (Vernez and Zellman, 1987). The frequency of separation depends in part on job category. The Air Force tends to have shorter separations than the Army (5.3 months on average) or the Navy (6.1 months).

According to Lewis (1984a), in an Army study, the spouse's perception of the soldier's role in the military contributes significantly to the acceptance of frequent absences from home. Family attitudes toward the separations are influenced by their perceptions of the necessity of the separations. Negative family attitudes about separations are reflected in their attitudes toward the Army, which ultimately may reduce soldier retention (Vernez and Zellman, 1987; Griffith et al., 1988; Orthner and Bowen, 1990).

Research findings on the relationship between separations and retention, however, are equivocal. While the disruptive effects of deployments and frequent relocations often are cited in the literature (Ethridge, 1989; Hunter, 1982), some researchers report that length and frequency of separations are less an issue than how well the separation is experienced. In studying retention decisions among Navy personnel, for example, Szoc (1982) found that the spouse's opinion with respect to staying in the Navy was the single most important factor in the sailor's decision to stay or leave, and that the spouse's opinion was influenced by more use of Navy services, greater years of service, and *satisfaction with separations due to deployments* (emphasis added). He notes that the last variable is

"perceptual and not behavioral" and suggests from this finding and other data "that how the separations are viewed may be as important -- if not more important -- than actual time away. Indeed among those who left the service, separations were viewed as far more problematic than among those who stayed, but the actual amount of separation was slightly higher among the stayers." Similar results were reported by Lewis (1985) for a sample of Air Force officers and enlisted members and spouses, where neither frequency nor length of TDY was significantly related to career intent.

Nonetheless, separation-induced stresses are real and affect both the servicemember and the family. Separations can cause the servicemember to feel guilt and shame about leaving the family. They can disrupt the relationship between husband and wife and can provide opportunities for extra-marital affairs (Hunter and Hickman, 1981). The servicemember may feel grief associated with the loss of the spouse's companionship, loss of the children's affection and loss of normal role requirements (Fentress, 1987). Some servicemembers may fear their loss of importance within the family when other family members assume the absent servicemember's role (Bortfeld, 1982).

For spouses, much of the research prior to 1960 focused on how waiting wives contributed to the health and well-being of their military spouses. In the 1960's, research began to describe the personal problems of wives, describing them as being under considerable stress. In the 1970's, studies indicated that military separations can actually foster a sense of independence within military spouses (Hunter, Gelb & Hickman, 1981). Responses to separations vary and many factors are associated with how a family will respond, among them previous life experiences, intensity of the military and other life stresses, availability of social supports, socioeconomic status, family attitudes about stressful experiences, family and individual characteristics, and coping capacities (Jensen, et al., 1986).

2. EFFECTS OF SEPARATIONS ON SPOUSES

According to Slade (1978), separation can either weaken or strengthen a marriage. Occasional short separations tend to be beneficial while longer tours are more problematic.

A general, seven-stage emotional pattern has been found among Navy wives who experience separation. The first stage occurs 1-6 weeks before deployment when the spouse begins anticipating the loss of the servicemember. Just before deployment, there is a period of detachment and withdrawal characterized by a sense of despair and hopelessness. Immediately following deployment, there is a period of emotional disorganization when the spouse may feel aimless and without purpose. The fourth stage, identified as recovery and stabilization, happens when the family settles into new patterns and routines. Anticipation of homecoming, the fifth stage, is a period of joy and apprehension. During the first six weeks after reunion the couple "renegotiates" their marriage contract, adjusting to the changes that both spouses have undergone. The final stage is a time of reintegration and stabilization when the marriage essentially returns to normal (Logan, 1987). A similar pattern was found among the wives of servicemen deployed to the Sinai on a peace keeping mission (Wood & Gravino, 1988).

Many hardships spouses experience due to separations are associated with taking sole responsibility for maintaining the household, caring for children, and solving family problems (Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Schwartz, Rosen & Moghadam, 1987). There can be problems gaining access to military services because of "red tape", including routine military-related processes such as receiving soldiers' paychecks and Leave and Earnings Statements, renewing identification cards, arranging for health services, communicating with servicemembers by mail or telephone, using powers of attorney, moving on or off base without the servicemember, and filing joint tax returns (Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Lewis, 1984a). In addition to military-related problems, routine problems like car repair and home maintenance can be onerous. Unique circumstances, such as a sick child or the anticipated birth of a child without the father's presence also can

cause anxiety for the spouse (Lewis 1984; Wood & Gravino, 1988). Sometimes the solo demands of maintaining a family and household are so great that the spouse may forego a career or education in order to devote more time to household responsibilities (Kohn, 1984).

The degree of stress the spouse experiences is dependent upon a number of factors including the spouse's own personal adaptability or flexibility and her previous exposure to family separations (Hunter, 1982). Separations can cause depression, anxiety, anger, physical symptoms, and sexual difficulties, in addition to resulting in loss of social relationships and security (McCubbin, 1980; Schwartz, et al., 1987; Martin & Ickovics, 1986; Bell & Quigley, 1991; Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985). They may also cause feelings of abandonment and loneliness (Wood & Gravino, 1988). Wives who were separated from their husbands during the Sinai peacekeeping mission reported that loneliness and isolation were key factors that affected family morale and their own ability to function effectively (Lewis, 1984). In addition, Fentress (1987) describes military-induced separation as similar to a grief experience for the family. Whenever adults lose someone of great value and significance for an extended period of time (three months or more) they go through a grief cycle that is similar to the loss of someone by death. Although it is a more abbreviated process and only temporary, the emotional stages are parallel. Hunter's (1982) review of the separation literature also reports that during lengthy separations, the military wife may grieve as a widow.

Despite the abundance of research findings that military separations are stressful, there is also research that suggests some positive effects of separations. As early as 1945, Hill noted that many wives grew as individuals due to their war-induced separations. Not only do separations provide the opportunity for greater independence, they can promote development of independence, self-sufficiency, and maturity (Schwartz et al., 1987; Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Jensen 1986). Many women also take advantage of the opportunity to enhance themselves educationally or vocationally (Lexier, 1982). Though separations may cause conflict and anxiety because the spouse must assume the role of both mother and father, the success of doing both well may also result in increased self-confidence (Hunter, 1982).

3. SEPARATIONS AND CHILDREN

The research described in this report specifically addresses the impact of separations on children; an area that has been somewhat neglected. Previous research does show that children play a key role in how separations are experienced. In studies of "waiting wives" of peacekeeping troops in the Sinai, Wood and Gravino (1988) describe the presence of children as both a comfort and a strain to mothers. The mothers dreaded the sole parenting responsibilities and the anticipated monotony of six months of primary contact with young children. They also regretted the time the fathers would lose with the children and the milestones they would miss in young children's development (Rosenberg & Vuozzo, 1989; Schwartz, et al., 1987; Wood & Gravino, 1988). Ultimately, however, for the waiting wives, the emotional and physical closeness with the children was a source of strength, and the responsibility for them prevented loneliness and depression (Wood & Gravino, 1988; Hunter, 1982).

The effects of a father's absence on children are mediated by pre-existing father-family relationships, age, sex and birth-order, as well as the meaning of the absence to the family (Jensen, 1986). Other factors include the length of the absence, the child's ability to cope with stress and the availability of a father substitute (Fentress, 1987). The most important factor, however, is the mother's ability to cope. The mother's adjustment to separation appears to have a profound effect on the child(ren)'s emotional and social adjustment (Hunter, 1982; Jensen, 1986; Lewis, 1984b; McCubbin et al., 1976). If the mother successfully adapts to the separation, the children are less likely to experience intense negative effects due to the father's absence (Fentress, 1987). Research also indicates that the stability of the marriage and a positive father relationship with the children are important resources that help the mother adjust to the separation (Lexier, 1982).

4. FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE SEPARATION EXPERIENCE

As previously noted, a number of factors have been shown to affect the servicemembers' and families' separation experience. Research indicates that families who are the most vulnerable to the negative effects of separation include

those experiencing separation for the first time, young or immature families, couples with an unstable marriage, families with limited military experience, and families who have recently relocated.

Separation Experience

The first family separation appears to have the greatest effect on family members. Early separation experiences shape the way the family copes with subsequent separations, with families that adapted well to earlier separations tending to fare better with later separations (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985).

Youth and Immaturity

Research indicates that young soldiers and their families tend to have trouble adjusting to the demands of separations (Hunter & Hickman, 1981). The young wife may not possess the skills to adjust to the stress of separation and the couple's relationship may not be mature enough to withstand the strains of reunion (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985; Lewis, 1984b; Martin & Ickovics, 1986). According to data from the Annual Survey of Army Families (ASAF), separation issues are more important for spouses of lower ranking soldiers than for higher ranks (Griffith et al., 1988; Rosenberg & Vuozzo, 1989; Coolbaugh et al., 1991). Problems arise for younger couples because they tend to have young children who are physically more demanding than older ones, have less income, and less established social supports (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985; Lewis, 1984; Orthner & Bowen, 1990).

Stability of the Marriage

Couples with existing marital problems are more likely to have trouble adjusting to the stress of separation (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985). Unstable marriages often are characterized by poor communication between partners which often results in lack of preparation for the separation (Hunter & Hickman, 1981). Newly married couples also are vulnerable to the strains of separation because they have not had time to develop coping strategies to weather the normal

problems of marriage (Hill, 1945; Martin & Ickovics, 1986). Segal et al. (1987) discuss the "crystallization" and "stabilization" that occur in a marriage when the couple has everyday conversations which result in a "shared social reality." As they point out, for couples who have not been married long, the process of crystallization and stabilization may not be complete and they may thus experience separations differently from couples who have been married longer.

Lack of Experience with Military Life

ASAF data indicate that young spouses of enlisted soldiers may have problems coping when the soldier is away because they are still learning how to get along in the military environment (Griffith et al., 1988). Other data suggest that families with little or no military experience are more likely to be affected by the stresses of separation because they are less likely to be aware of support services or are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward formal or informal military supports (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985; Hunter 1982; Orthner & Bowen, 1990).

Recent Relocation

A separation after a recent relocation is likely to be more difficult because the family is new to the location and often lacks the immediate availability of support from extended family or long-term friends (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985; Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Martin & Ickovics, 1986).

5. COPING DURING SEPARATIONS

Families adopt a variety of coping mechanisms to endure prolonged separations, some more healthy than others. Hill (1945) found a relatively predictable "roller coaster" pattern of adjustment which involved initial disorganization followed by recovery and eventual reorganization. To delineate specific coping mechanisms wives employ in response to prolonged separations, McCubbin (1976) studied the readjustment of 47 families of servicemen missing in action in Vietnam and identified six coping patterns: seeking resolution and

expressing feelings; maintaining family integrity; establishing autonomy and maintaining family ties; reducing anxiety; establishing independence through self development; and maintaining the past and dependence on religion.

Other research has identified similar coping strategies. Wives cope with separation by investing time and attention in the family, developing interpersonal relationships and social supports, managing strain, maintaining an optimistic definition of the situation, and developing self-reliance and self-esteem (Hunter, 1982; Lewis, 1984). Well-defined family roles, positive self-perception of family members, and a stable marriage also are important factors in dealing with separations (Jacobs & Hicks, 1987; Kirkland & Katz, 1988; Lexier, 1982; McCubbin & Lester, 1977).

A key element discussed in coping with separations is social support. Rosen and Moghadam (1988) examined the "stress-buffering" model of social support and assert that stress (e.g., military separations) stimulates adaptation in most people. As a partial explanation for this buffering effect, they suggest that wives with "healthy coping resources" engage the support of other wives during stressful periods. Other researchers have reported that social supports can "armor" people against the health consequences of life stress (McCubbin & Lester, 1977) and that social support has been found to be an important variable in the management of family stress (Jacobs & Hicks, 1987). Some researchers have found that the stress-buffering effect of social support may be more strongly associated with the *perceived* availability of support (Lewis, 1984b; Orthner & Bowen, 1990; Rosen & Moghadam, 1988); however, Rosen and Moghadam caution that the influence of personality on perceptions of support has not been fully explored.

A study by the Army found that during Operation Desert Shield/Storm, families that adapted well had previous deployments, adequate finances, good knowledge of the Army system, and organized personal and family affairs. The study also found that Family Support Groups (FSGs) were the most important factor in promoting social support. In addition to FSGs, pre-deployment briefings, hotlines and Rear Detachment Commands (RDC) provided beneficial support that helped spouses cope (Bell and Quigley, 1991). Bell reported that Desert

Shield/Storm findings were "generally consistent with prior deployment research." (Bell, 1991)

6. REUNIONS AFTER SEPARATION

Reunions after separations can be stressful. Family members may be extremely anxious and hold unrealistic expectations for the soldier's return (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985). The euphoria of the "honeymoon" period immediately following the reunion may mask underlying conflicts (Lexier, 1982). However, according to McCubbin (1980), the strains of reunion appear to be a natural and predictable outcome of managing the demands of separations. Jensen et al. (1986) and Slade (1978), in describing the reunion studies of several post-World War II investigators, suggest that "separation and reunion have differential effects." A good response to the separation may predict a bad response to the reunion. For some the reverse may be true, and other families may not cope well with either.

Many couples have trouble readjusting after the reunion (Rosenberg & Vuozzo, 1989). The returning soldier often expects things to return to "normal" after his return. Most soldiers do not anticipate that their own roles will have changed (Hunter, 1982). During the soldier's absence, however, spouses have shouldered the responsibility of day-to-day functioning and may find it hard to relinquish the role of family decision-maker (Harrell, 1985). The well-adjusted wife who has become self-sufficient may pose a threat to the soldier. The longer the separation, the larger the couple's differences about role allocation are likely to be and the more difficult it will be to achieve reintegration (Hunter, 1982). How the soldier perceives the spouse's accomplishments can set the tone for the reunion (Lexier, 1982). The soldier may be proud and happy that the family successfully adapted to the separation, or the soldier may feel resentful and unwanted (Harrell, 1985).

In addition, the spouse who has adapted to the dual roles of mother and father and successfully managed the affairs of the family, may also have grown as an individual. With this growth comes increased self-esteem and self-confidence

(McCubbin and Dahl, 1976; Hunter, 1982). Spouses often do not want their relationship with their husband to return to one of pre-separation dependence or submission. Segal et al. (1987) report that their study of military wives shows that marital separations produce "changes in the conceptions that many wives have of themselves and their marriages. The more wives change during the separation, the more adjustment is necessitated when their husbands return and the greater the changes in their marriages." Finally, successful family reunions are aided by good marital adjustment, constructive ways of settling disagreements, family integration and the ability to put aside individual desires for the family interest (Slade, 1978).

7. THE AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT DURING SEPARATIONS

Military personnel perform at their best when their family members feel they are supported by the military. Family members who feel they are well supported become strong supporters of their spouses and their units, and are more favorably disposed to servicemember retention and to community involvement (Teitlebaum, 1990).

Information is one of the most important services the Air Force can provide to separated families. Because disseminating information is a successful method of relieving stress, formal military agencies are advised to maintain the flow of accurate and timely information to families (Lewis, 1984; Bortfeld, 1982; Van Vranken et al., 1984).

In addition, a reliable means of direct communication with the deployed servicemember can help alleviate fear and loneliness, improve the family's tolerance for the separation, and increase the family's commitment to the servicemember's career (Teitlebaum, 1988). Separation stress also is lessened if social integration exists between the spouse and the military community. Integration in the community allows a spouse to feel comfortable using base support services. The spouse thus knows that her actions are not a risk to the servicemember's career and/or the family's status in the community (McCubbin & Lester, 1984).

The Air Force provides support to families through formal programs as well as through unit-based support services. Each of these sources provide different services and appear to play a different role in supporting the family during separations.

Air Force Family Support Centers offer a number of family support services including: support to families during separation, referral and aid for families in crisis, family financial management education and consultation, and services for special needs families. In a study conducted for the Air Force, 98 percent of active duty personnel responded positively to the Family Support Centers. Base leaders' comments about the centers included "most valuable program on the base", and "my IG complaints have gone from 20 a week to 2-3 a month" (Harrell & Rayhawk, 1985).

A recent study for the Army showed that unit-based support services probably provide the most access and impact, both before and during separations. The types of information the unit can provide include:

- The purpose and importance of the servicemember's job
- The types of assistance and services available to families and how to get them
- The desirability of getting a will and power of attorney, and of arranging financial security while the servicemember is away
- Helping families understand and cope with possible changes in the family during separation and after reunion (Coolbaugh et al., 1991).

Well-integrated units and families provide effective support for each other (Kirkland & Katz, 1988; Lewis, 1984). Preliminary Desert Shield/Storm experiences seem to confirm this finding. Some program managers have suggested that family morale was highest in units where commands sustained active communication with their family members (Military Family, 12/90). Research on soldiers and families involved in the Sinai peacekeeping force

suggests the three key elements to developing and maintaining successful support of families are command sponsorship, a coordinated relationship between support networks and Army agencies, and a dedicated core of family members to facilitate support group interaction (Lewis, 1984a).

The Sinai mission also provided important information on the value of pre-deployment programs designed to prepare families for separations. Before the Sinai deployment, Chaplains at Ft. Bragg held pre-departure seminars for spouses that covered such topics as loss of companionship, assuming new and expanded family roles, feelings of grief, and the need for a supportive community (Fentress, 1987). According to Jensen et al. (1986), these types of pre-deployment programs not only serve to prepare families but also can be effective in strengthening them. Lexier (1982) describes a preventive program designed to minimize the impact of father absence in separations of six to eight months.

Pre-deployment briefings are also important for informing families about what military services exist and how to use them, and, the value of having a will, a power of attorney and direct deposits. Many families who need services may not get them because they are unaware the services exist. Families at the greatest risk are newcomers or first-term wives who often lack both the information and skills to obtain community services (Teitlebaum, 1988).

During separations, RDCs and FSGs have proven to be key elements in providing information and social support to separated families (Bell & Quigley, 1991; Lewis, 1984; Teitlebaum et al., 1989). RDCs provided effective assistance, rumor control, and help in dealing with problems around pay, benefits and Army services during the Sinai mission (Lewis, 1984; Teitlebaum et al., 1989). Bell and Quigley (1991) similarly report that RDCs were effective in providing information to families and rumor control during Desert Shield/Storm. They also report that FSGs were an important factor in promoting social support among separated families.

In summary, in the 45 years since Hill's groundbreaking work on returning soldiers (Hill, 1945), a considerable volume of separation literature has been

generated examining numerous aspects of military family separations. While some research findings have been consistent across studies, many have revealed mixed or inconclusive findings. Different families experience separations differently. Not all separations are stressful. Not all reunions are joyful. Some wives develop a new sense of self-confidence and independence during the separation, about which their returning husbands are proud. Other husbands find these changes threatening and stressful. Researchers do agree that a variety of factors, including both family characteristics and external support, contribute to the success (or failure) of a separation experience. The challenge is to further refine the military's understanding of the interaction of these factors in order to ensure early and frequent separation successes.

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II. METHODOLOGY

II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the samples, data collection techniques and data analysis procedures utilized to obtain information on family assistance programs offered to Air Force active duty and their families during Desert Shield/Storm. The chapter consists of four sections which address the:

- o Sample
- o Telephone surveys
- o Focus group guides and interview instruments
- o Data analysis.

The first section describes the sampling plan and characteristics of the three sample groups used for the telephone surveys. The following two sections outline the information which was collected via telephone interviews and site visits to three Air Force bases that were heavily involved in Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The final section indicates the analytical procedures used to derive the findings presented in this report.

1. SAMPLE

Three groups were identified for telephone interviews -- spouses, single parents and dual-military couples with children. Because of the Air Force's desire for in-depth information on the relatively small number of deployed single parents and dual-military couples with children, it was decided to attempt to interview all of these individuals. However, those individuals who deployed from OCONUS bases were excluded because of the difficulty and cost of completing telephone calls overseas and the relatively low numbers deploying from those sites. A total of 633 single parents and 82 dual-military couples, or 164 individuals, were initially identified by the Air Force Military Personnel Center (MPC) as meeting these criteria.

Three representative Air Force bases were selected by AFFAM for in-depth study -- Hill AFB, Utah, from the Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC); Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina, from the Tactical Air Command (TAC); and Lakenheath AFB, England, from U.S. Air Force, Europe (USAFE). At these bases, a random sample of spouses was selected for telephone interviews to provide quantitative data to complement the qualitative information collected from site visits at the three bases. An initial sample of 369 spouses at Hill AFB and 359 spouses at Myrtle Beach AFB was selected for telephone interviews. Because of cost and time factors, as well as the limited number of spouses with telephones, a random sample of 125 spouses was selected at Lakenheath AFB for on-site survey administration.

Eighty-one single parents, 23 individuals from the dual-military sample, and 11 spouses at both Hill AFB and Myrtle Beach AFB were subsequently dropped from the sample. The reasons for excluding these individuals included:

- Were not deployed for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm
- Had no children (single parents and dual military only)
- Did not have child custody (single parents only)
- Were not married (spouses and dual military only)
- Were married (single parents only)
- Were presently overseas
- Were retired or separated from the Air Force.

As a result, 552 single parents, 141 members of dual-military couples, 358 spouses at Hill AFB, and 348 spouses at Myrtle Beach AFB were potentially available to be interviewed.

Telephone interviews were completed with 263 single parents, 96 members of dual-military couples, and 316 spouses (see Exhibit II-1). The primary reasons for not completing interviews were incorrect phone numbers and difficulties in reaching individuals within six attempts (i.e., no answer or odd work schedules). The number of individuals declining to participate was extremely small.

EXHIBIT II-1
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF SINGLE PARENTS, DUAL-MILITARY COUPLES, AND SPOUSES PARTICIPATING IN TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

GROUP	SURVEY SAMPLE	RESPONDENT SAMPLE
Single Parents	552	263 (48%)
Dual Military	141	96 (68%)
Spouses:		
Hill AFB	358	149 (42%)
Myrtle Beach AFB	348	121 (35%)
Lakenheath AFB	125	46 (37%)
TOTAL	831	316 (38%)

The respondent sample was compared to the total sample on known parameters (see Exhibit II-2) to assess potential non-response bias. In general, the differences between the two groups are very minor, suggesting that the respondent samples are fairly representative of the larger populations. Three differences bear mentioning, however:

- Females are somewhat over-represented in the single-parent respondent sample (52% vs. 41% in the survey sample)
- Airmen in the E3-E4 paygrades are slightly under-represented, primarily in the spouse respondent sample (21% vs. 29% in the survey sample)
- Blacks are under-represented in the spouse respondent sample (4% vs. 13% of active duty members deployed) [Defense 91].

Where there are significant differences in findings by sex, race, or paygrade, they are indicated in the report. In these instances, the reader should recognize that group statistics may need to be adjusted slightly to correct for these biases in the respondent sample. The reader should also bear in mind that the spouse sample is representative only of three bases and may not be representative of all deployed

EXHIBIT II-2
COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS TO SURVEY SAMPLE
BY SEX AND RANK

	RESPONDENTS			SURVEY SAMPLE		
	Single Parent	Dual Military	Spouse	Single Parent	Dual Military	Spouse
Sex:						
Male	126 (48%)	47 (49%)	4 (1%)	326 (59%)	73 (52%)	13 (2%)
Female	137 (52%)	49 (51%)	312 (99%)	226 (41%)	68 (48%)	818 (98%)
Rank:						
E3-E4	53 (20%)	25 (26%)	66 (21%)	140 (25%)	41 (29%)	235 (29%)
E5-E6	147 (56%)	51 (53%)	156 (49%)	280 (51%)	75 (53%)	391 (47%)
E7-E9	34 (13%)	12 (13%)	47 (15%)	73 (13%)	14 (10%)	94 (11%)
Officers	29 (11%)	8 (8%)	47 (15%)	59 (11%)	11 (8%)	111 (13%)
TOTAL:	263	96	316	552	141	831

Note: All percents reported are column percents.

Air Force spouses. Similarly, the single-parent and dual-military samples may not be representative of these individuals who deployed from bases overseas.

Detailed information on the single parents, dual-military couples, and spouses interviewed is provided in Exhibit II-3, on the following page, which describes the demographic characteristics of these groups.

2. TELEPHONE SURVEYS

Two telephone surveys were developed for this study, one for spouses and another for single parents and dual-military couples. Both surveys were equivalent in length and took approximately 20 minutes to administer over the telephone. Husbands and wives in dual-military couples were interviewed separately. Similar questions were posed to all three groups concerning:

- Length of deployment
- Previous deployments
- Pre-deployment briefings
- Communication between deployed servicemembers and their families
- Squadron support during and after deployment
- Children's problems (before, during, and after deployment)
- Relationship with children (before and after deployment)
- Commitment to Air Force (before and after deployment).

In addition, spouses were questioned about needs and issues of unique concern to them. These additional questions pertained to:

- Preparation for deployment (e.g., wills, power of attorney)
- Sources of support during the deployment
- Level of stress experienced
- Need for services (before, during, and after deployment)

EXHIBIT II-3
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SINGLE PARENTS, DUAL-MILITARY COUPLES, AND SPOUSES INTERVIEWED

	Single Parents		Dual Military		Spouses	
Age:						
19-25 yrs.	28	(11%)	18	(19%)	72	(23%)
26-30 yrs.	74	(28%)	34	(35%)	96	(30%)
31-35 yrs.	68	(26%)	28	(29%)	73	(23%)
36-40 yrs.	68	(26%)	12	(13%)	53	(17%)
41 + yrs.	24	(9%)	4	(4%)	21	(7%)
Sex:						
Male	126	(48%)	47	(49%)	4	(1%)
Female	137	(52%)	49	(51%)	312	(99%)
Rank:						
E3-E4	53	(20%)	25	(26%)	66	(21%)
E5-E6	147	(56%)	51	(53%)	156	(49%)
E7-E9	34	(13%)	12	(13%)	47	(15%)
Officers	29	(11%)	8	(8%)	47	(15%)
Race:						
White	176	(67%)	69	(73%)	274	(88%)
Black	65	(25%)	20	(21%)	14	(4%)
Hispanic	14	(5%)	4	(4%)	10	(3%)
Other	8	(3%)	2	(2%)	17	(5%)
Education:						
Less than high school	1	(<1%)	2	(2%)	17	(5%)
High school	88	(34%)	44	(46%)	100	(32%)
Some college	123	(47%)	29	(30%)	108	(34%)
Technical/Specialist	12	(5%)	6	(6%)	28	(9%)
College graduate	22	(8%)	10	(10%)	52	(17%)
Post graduate	17	(6%)	5	(5%)	10	(3%)
Years Married:						
1-2	NA		16	(17%)	47	(15%)
3-5	NA		37	(38%)	70	(22%)
6-10	NA		25	(26%)	99	(31%)
11 or more	NA		18	(19%)	100	(32%)
Children:						
None	NA		NA		81	(26%)
One	158	(60%)	50	(52%)	78	(25%)
Two	80	(30%)	37	(39%)	96	(30%)
Three	21	(8%)	9	(9%)	38	(12%)
Four	3	(1%)	0	(0%)	15	(5%)
Five or more	1	(<1%)	0	(0%)	8	(2%)

- o Use of services (before, during, and after deployment)
- o Employment status (before, during, and after deployment).

Single parents and dual-military couples, on the other hand, were asked additional questions pertaining to:

- o Family care plans
- o Level of stress experienced
- o Children's need for services (before, during, and after deployment)
- o Children's sources of support during the deployment.

3. FOCUS GROUP GUIDES AND INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

Five-day site visits were conducted at Hill AFB, Myrtle Beach AFB, and Lakenheath AFB. The purpose of the site visits was to gain a greater understanding of issues at the pre-deployment phase, during the deployment, and post-deployment. During each site visit, focus groups comprising approximately 8-10 individuals were conducted with:

- o Active duty
  - Enlisted members
  - Officers
  - Single parents
  - Dual-military couples
- o Spouses (enlisted and officers)
- o Youth (12-14 year olds, 15-17 year olds).

In addition, interviews were conducted with service providers, including:

- o Family Support Center Director
- o Chaplain

- o Mental Health Director
- o Child Development Center Director
- o Youth Activities Director
- o Family Advocacy Representative
- o School Principal.

At each base, interviews were also held with five squadron commanders, and focus groups were held with between five and fifteen first sergeants.

In the focus groups, spouses, active duty, and youth were asked to describe and comment on the type and quality of preparation provided for deployment, the impact of deployment on family members and family functioning, the type and quality of services provided to families and used by families, the support provided by squadrons, and the effect the deployment had on family relationships and subsequent changes which have occurred. Leadership and service providers were similarly asked to describe the problems families experienced and the ways families coped. In addition, leadership and service providers described their responses to families' needs as well as the problems experienced in carrying out their roles during the deployment.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative analyses used in this report are based on frequencies and cross-tabulations of the telephone interview data. A summary of these findings is presented in the text along with exhibits. All findings presented were found to be statistically significant at the .1 level or better, indicating that there is no more than a 10% likelihood that the differences between groups occurred by chance. Descriptive information has been incorporated in the discussion of the findings in order to provide a more detailed explanation of the findings. The qualitative information is based on a content analysis of focus group and personal interview data collected during site visits.

III. FINDINGS

III. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis and content analysis of the data collected during the site visits and in the telephone interviews. The chapter is presented in three sections:

- Pre-deployment--including preparations for deployment, assistance by the Air Force, and issues of concern
- During the Deployment--including the impact of the deployment on families, needs for services, how service providers and squadrons responded, and the most common problems of families and leadership
- Reunion and Post-deployment--including the impact of the deployment on marital and child relationships, problems experienced during the reunion phase, and the effect of the deployment experience on commitment to the Air Force.

Within each section, the specific findings are reported as they relate to single parents, dual-military couples, civilian spouses, and children. In addition, findings from the on-site interviews and focus groups with leadership, service providers, active duty personnel, spouses and youth are presented.

1. PRE-DEPLOYMENT

The pre-deployment phase varied in length from a few hours to several weeks, depending upon the type of unit and the base. Many individuals were notified only hours before they deployed, making adequate preparations almost impossible; other servicemembers were given several weeks notice to prepare their families and household affairs. Preparation was difficult because of the uncertainty over the length of the deployment. At the time of the initial deployment in August 1990, many active duty were given 90-day orders and made preparations for that period of time, when in fact the majority of servicemembers were gone seven months.

1.1 Impact of the Deployment on Families

Because of the short notice and secrecy of the initial mobilization, many families were not mentally or emotionally prepared for the deployment. Spouses reported that although the servicemember had bags packed and waiting for days or weeks, they were not allowed to tell even their families when they were actually deploying. The secrecy and lack of planning prior to notification often created an atmosphere of anxiety and fear for days or weeks before the deployment. Specific concerns that added to this atmosphere included:

- Uncertainty about actual time of departure
- Number of "false alarms" on the date of departure
- Inexperience with deployments
- Disbelief that deployment/war could actually happen
- Disbelief that "non-mobility" unit was deploying
- Lack of accurate information.

Focus group participants told of saying good-bye two or three times before the servicemember actually deployed. Family members would say good-bye, thinking the servicemember was leaving, only to receive a phone call hours later from the servicemember saying they were not going yet. This produced a kind of emotional "yo-yo" for families. One spouse said that the third time her husband left the house she told him, "he better get on a plane this time or not come home", because the family could not handle saying good-bye again.

For single parents and dual-military couples, saying good-bye to their children was particularly difficult. Many servicemembers did not have enough time to prepare themselves or their children emotionally for the separation. One couple described their anxiety in sending a three-month-old baby to live with grandparents. A single parent told of having only six hours to explain to his seven-year-old son why he was being deployed to Saudi Arabia and that the child would be going to live with his grandmother.

1.2 Deployment Selection and Screening

There was also great variation in the deployment selection and screening policies that were employed, especially among "non-mobility" and partially deployed units. In these units, leadership often tried to avoid sending single parents or both members of a dual-military couple if they had children. In many mobility units, however, single parents and dual-military couples were equally as likely to deploy as singles without dependents, or servicemembers with civilian spouses. In these units, selection for deployment was based strictly on the job of the active duty member, the need for the job overseas, and the proficiency of the servicemember in performing that job. As one leader put it, "we sent the best people to perform the mission".

Screening servicemembers for the deployment also produced concerns. It was not clear to servicemembers or families what conditions or criteria would make someone ineligible for the deployment. One spouse told about her husband who had asthma and was not supposed to deploy until medical facilities were available, but went in the first wave of the deployment and had serious health problems. One commander said that if he had to do it over again, he would have been more cautious about sending people with potential problems, because too many turned into real problems, and it was expensive and time consuming to make personnel replacements.

1.3 Family Preparations for the Deployment

The short notice of the deployment limited family preparations. For many families there was time for nothing more than getting a will and power of attorney prepared. For single parents and dual-military couples, it meant implementing a Family Care Plan and closing up households.

Civilian Spouses

JAG staff made enormous efforts to make sure everyone at least had a power of attorney and a will. Both of these items were critical for families.

Spouses needed a power of attorney to conduct business and manage the household in the servicemember's absence. Wills were needed in the event of casualties that would require the settlement of estates.

Eighty-seven percent of spouses reported that they had a power of attorney when the servicemember deployed. Similarly, 84% of spouses reported that they and the servicemember both had wills prior to the deployment. However, significantly fewer spouses (64%) reported that they had the equivalent of two weeks pay available for emergencies when the servicemember deployed.

Although there was no pattern to the demographic characteristics associated with having a power of attorney, there were several variables related to will preparation and the availability of two weeks emergency cash.

Whether or not both spouses had wills prepared appears to have been related to:

- o Age--younger spouses were less likely to have wills
- o Years married to current spouse--those married fewer years were less likely to have wills
- o Presence of children--those with children were significantly more likely to have wills than those without children
- o Rank--enlisted personnel were less likely to have wills than were officers
- o Receipt of pre-deployment briefings--those who reported that they received a briefing were somewhat more likely to have prepared wills.

Two of these variables were also related to the family having two weeks pay available for emergency situations:

- o Presence of children--the presence of children in the household made it significantly less likely that the family had two weeks pay available

- o Rank--enlisted personnel were significantly less likely than officers to have two weeks pay available.

The number of previous deployments was not related to either the preparation of wills or the availability of emergency cash.

Single Parents and Dual-Military Couples

Single parents and dual-military couples were queried about their Family Care Plans and the arrangements they made for the care of their children during their deployment. Over 75% of dual-military couples and 59% of single parents sent their children to a location away from the base. Of those who sent their children away to stay with caregivers, approximately 90% of both single parents and dual-military couples sent their children more than 150 miles from their homes. Respondents were asked why they kept their children in the area or sent them away. The most frequently reported reasons for having children stay in the immediate area of the base were:

- o To be near a source of information about the parent
- o To avoid disrupting children's schooling
- o To allow children to stay near friends and sources of support.

Another reason cited only by dual-military couples was for their children to feel supported by the Air Force community. All of the reasons were rated as very important for keeping children in the immediate area of the base from which the parents had deployed.

For both single parents and dual-military couples, the most important reasons for sending their children to live with caregivers away from the base were:

- o To ensure their children received adequate child care
- o To place their children near relatives
- o To place their children in a community where they felt supported

o To give their children more security.

Only about one-third of both single parents and dual-military couples rated "to better meet financial needs" as a very important reason for sending their children away to the caregiver.

The most commonly used caregivers varied significantly between single parents and dual-military couples. Dual-military couples overwhelmingly chose grandparents as the primary caregiver (74%). Although this was the most frequently identified caregiver for single parents as well, only 44% of single-parents used grandparents as the primary caregiver, while 29% used an ex-spouse, and 13% used an aunt/uncle. Dual-military couples were slightly more likely to send their children to an aunt/uncle (12%) than an ex-spouse (10%).

In only a minimal number of cases was the primary caregiver not the legal guardian. For 3% of the single parents, the legal guardian lived too far away to be the primary caregiver; and for 2% the legal guardian had no time to care for the child or was on alert him or herself. In all but 3% of the cases of dual-military couples, the legal guardian was the primary caregiver.

For 19% of the single parents and 14% of the dual-military couples, the primary caregiver and/or legal guardian was not originally listed on the Family Care Plan. During focus groups, several participants indicated that problems arose because their Family Care Plans were not really developed with long term deployments in mind, but rather for short TDYs or training exercises. The uncertainty over the length of the deployment had made planning difficult. Several single parents and dual-military couples indicated that they would have made different arrangements if they had understood that their initial 90-day orders did not mean 90-day deployments.

Dual-military couples seem to have had somewhat more success with their Family Care Plans than single parents. Over three-quarters of dual-military couples reported that their Family Care Plan worked very well and 90% would use the

same arrangements again. For single parents, 62% reported that the plan worked very well and 83% would use the same arrangements again.

One of the biggest difficulties encountered with the Family Care Plans, as reported in focus groups was the cost of sending children to the caregiver. Some people never anticipated having to enact their plans, and therefore they did not have the money readily available to pay for airplane tickets. Others said they simply could not save enough money. Several commanders and first sergeants were sympathetic. As one first sergeant put it, "it's just not realistic to expect a two-striper to have that much money ($1500) just sitting in an account somewhere, just in case."

1.4 Assistance Provided by the Air Force

Probably because of the short notice, relatively few respondents reported receiving a briefing prior to deployment. Approximately 29% of spouses indicated that they received a briefing prior to their spouse deploying. The numbers are slightly higher for single parents and dual-military couples, with 38% of dual-military and 40% of single parents indicating that they received a briefing.

Exhibit III-1, following this page, indicates the organizations from which respondents received briefings. Among those individuals who did receive a pre-deployment briefing, most were briefed by their squadron or their spouse's squadron. Spouses were equally as likely to have received a briefing from the FSC (36%) as to have received information in a briefing packet (36%). Single parents (28%) and dual-military couples (23%) were less likely to have received a briefing from the FSC.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether the briefings they received were very helpful, somewhat helpful or not helpful. Most respondents rated the briefings from their squadrons as somewhat helpful, with 48% of spouses, 50% of single parents and 52% of dual-military couples responding this way. Twenty-seven percent of dual-military couples, however, found the squadron briefing was not helpful to them. The majority of respondents who

EXHIBIT III-1
SOURCE AND HELPFULNESS OF PRE-DEPLOYMENT BRIEFINGS

	N = 90 Spouses	N = 105 Single Parents	N = 36 Dual-Military Couples
	%	%	%
AGENCY			
Squadron	81	80	92
FSC	36	28	23
Other Base Agency	23	31	36
Briefing Packet	36	35	36
HELPFULNESS			
Squadron			
Not Helpful	13	10	27
Somewhat Helpful	48	50	52
Very Helpful	39	40	18
FSC			
Not Helpful	3	14	25
Somewhat Helpful	41	41	25
Very Helpful	56	45	50
Other Base Agency			
Not Helpful	--	6	8
Somewhat Helpful	35	44	54
Very Helpful	68	50	39
Briefing Packet			
Not Helpful	--	5	15
Somewhat Helpful	32	68	39
Very Helpful	68	27	46

received a briefing from the FSC identified it as being very helpful, with only a small percentage saying it was not helpful. Briefing packets were identified as very helpful by the majority of spouses and dual-military couples and as somewhat helpful by single parents. Briefings provided by other service providers were generally thought to be very helpful.

Overall, individuals who received briefings generally found them helpful; the real problem was the large number of people who did not receive a briefing or assistance from the Air Force in preparing themselves or their families for the deployment. The focus group and interview data suggest that families living off base and families from units that only deployed a small number of people were less likely to get pre-deployment information.

The role of the units, the FSC and other service providers in preparing families appears to have been inconsistent, varying from base to base and unit to unit and depending upon the time of the deployment. Without exception, however, commanders and base leadership thought very highly of the efforts of the Legal office in preparing servicemembers. JAG staff were often on the mobility line to prepare the wills and powers of attorney, and staff worked 24 hours a day to assist units in deployment preparation, regardless of how short the notice was for the deployment.

In units that had time to prepare, the FSC or other service providers were often called upon to assist in preparing families. These efforts were highly regarded by leadership and families. However, many leaders and service providers supported the statement that "(units) needed to start sooner with briefings and support groups and needed to train/drill on family deployment preparedness". Leadership indicated that they would like to have manuals, checklists, and information packets to help them and the families prepare for deployment. Virtually all of the leaders interviewed felt the deployment would have gone smoother and caused less stress if such tools had been available.

2. DURING THE DEPLOYMENT

For the majority of respondents, the deployment phase was approximately seven months, although individual deployments ranged from one month to twelve months. A small number of civilian spouses indicated that their spouses had not yet returned from Saudi Arabia at the time of the telephone interviews. In the interviews, respondents were asked how they and their children handled the

deployment, how stressful they found certain aspects, and how they responded to various situations. In addition, respondents were asked about support they received from the squadrons, the Family Support Center and other base agencies.

The focus groups explored in greater depth specific problems and how they were handled. The interviews with leadership and service providers identified how resources helped families cope and how the families affected the servicemember and his or her ability to carry out the mission.

There were several issues that surfaced repeatedly in the focus groups and interviews as having caused significant problems for families, service providers, and leadership. Some of the more critical problems that occurred included:

- o Uncertainty about the length of the deployment
- o Slow mail service
- o Rumors
- o Financial problems
- o Tension between deployed and non-deployed.

These problems were expressed in a variety of ways by respondents and their children. Some of them, as will be discussed in the sections that follow, have had consequences which have continued beyond the deployment.

2.1 Impact of the Deployment on Families

Responses to the deployment varied widely. Some respondents handled the separation very well; others found the separation very stressful and encountered many problems that required the involvement of service providers and squadron leadership.

Single Parents and Dual-Military Couples

Overall, both single parents and dual-military couples indicated that they handled the separation from their children very well. Eighty-six percent of dual military and 92% of single parents reported that they handled the separation from their children somewhat well or very well. However, when parents responded to the stress indicators on missing their children and being concerned over their well-being, approximately 50% of both groups indicated that they found the situation to be very stressful.

In focus groups, single parents and dual-military couples described some of the stresses they experienced during the separation from their children, such as missing birthdays, a child's first steps, and Christmas. Some parents were concerned over how their children were being raised in their absence and what was happening to their children's school work, since many children's grades declined during this time period.

Pre-deployment briefings had mediating effects on the level of stress experienced by dual-military couples. Only 30% of dual-military couples who received two or more briefings described the experience as very stressful, whereas this number jumped to 50% or higher for respondents who received one briefing or no briefings.

The level of stress experienced differed for men and women. Although equal numbers of male (51%) and female single parents (51%) found the separation very stressful, 30% of male single parents said the separation was not stressful, as compared to only 17% of females.

Level of stress was also related to how well parents felt they were being kept informed about their children's well-being. Over 80% of dual military and single parents who said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the level of information they received about their children reported the separation as very stressful.

Dual-military couples were also queried about the stress they experienced being separated from each other. Surprisingly, few people reported the separation as very stressful (28%), and 58% reported the separation to be "not stressful." This finding may be partially accounted for by the fact that many dual-military couples were deployed together, and so were not separated for any significant length of time. Once again, pre-deployment briefings mediated the stress; 74% of dual military who received a briefing said the separation was not stressful, compared to 50% of those who did not receive a briefing.

The issue of assigning both members of a dual-military couple to the same location was a controversial one. Some commanders and first sergeants expressed concern that joint deployments within the military theater of operations would cause serious morale problems, because of the resentment generated among other airmen who were deprived of conjugal relations. Other unit leaders believed that mission alone should dictate assignments, and reported no resulting morale problems. The couples themselves were equally divided. Several of those with children who were deployed to the same location expressed concern that their children would be left parentless if they were both killed, whereas the likelihood of their both being killed would be less if they were at separate locations. Others who were separated, however, fought to be assigned to the same location. Among those who were separately deployed, concern was also expressed about the time it took for them to find out from the Air Force where their spouse was located.

Civilian Spouses

The overwhelming majority of civilian spouses (89%) in the study did not leave the immediate area when their active duty spouse was deployed to the Gulf. The small percentage that did leave did so to be near relatives, to give their children more security, or to be in a community where they felt supported. In focus group discussions, spouses who left the area were generally younger, did not have children old enough for school, and were not working at the time their spouses deployed.

Spouses also reported they felt closer to their spouses by staying at the base and were more likely to receive information about them than if they left the area. It was very difficult for spouses at OCONUS bases to go home during the deployment, because if they were gone for 30 days or more they lost the cost of living allowance (COLA) provided for OCONUS tours.

When queried about how well they handled the separation experience, 90% of the spouses in the sample reported that they handled the experience somewhat well or very well. Spouses were then asked about a series of events or circumstances they may have had to deal with during the deployment and were asked to indicate how stressful they found these different events. Events ranged from handling family finances on their own to serving as both parents to their children to starting a new job. There were 11 items in all, which were factor analyzed to produce four categories:

- o Life stresses included:
  - Staying in touch with your spouse
  - Getting information about your spouse
  - Having a baby without your spouse (17% of spouses had a child during the deployment)
  - Handling a major crisis
- o Child stresses included:
  - Talking with children about the deployment
  - Serving as both parents to the children
  - Helping children with school work/activities
- o Transition stresses included:
  - Starting a new job (35% of spouses started a new job)
  - Moving (30% of spouses moved during the deployment)
- o Independence stresses included:
  - Managing family finances
  - Attending events without the spouse.

Exhibit III-2 presents the levels of stress experienced by spouses in each of the four categories. Spouses had more difficulty with life stresses and child stresses than with transition experiences or independence issues. The majority of spouses found life and child stresses to be somewhat or very stressful.

EXHIBIT III-2
STRESS EXPERIENCED BY SPOUSES

	Not Stressful	Somewhat Stressful	Very Stressful
Life Stresses	29%	51%	20%
Child Stresses	33%	36%	31%
Transition Stresses	79%	10%	11%
Independence Stresses	56%	26%	18%

In focus groups, spouses discussed some events they found to be stressful, including:

- Getting accurate information (rather than rumors) about their spouses and their living conditions
- Interpreting Leave and Earning Statements (LES)
- Using the power of attorney issued by their spouses
- Taking care of household repairs
- Having complete responsibility for their children and household.

One of biggest problems during the deployment was using the power of attorney. Although Legal had issued the power of attorney, Finance would not accept it in many cases because they disagreed with Legal on the rights and limitations of the power of attorney. Spouses also had difficulty using the power of attorney to move quarters on or off base, as well as with many legal transactions in the civilian community.

The level of life stresses experienced by spouses was affected by the presence of children. Individuals with children were almost twice as likely to

identify their experiences as very stressful as individuals without children. Otherwise there were no significant differences between groups in the levels of stress reported.

One factor that undoubtedly contributed to the high life stress scores was the difficulty involved in sorting out real information from the rumors which were rampant. Rumors created enormous stress for family members and servicemembers, as well as leadership and service providers. Spouses and children often received news about conditions at the front or troop rotation plans directly from their spouses in Saudi. Similarly, the information about problems at the home base or rumors about command plans would find their way to Saudi Arabia via a telephone call, eliciting concerns about family members at home or questions for commanders. Squadron leaders and their spouses, on the front and at home, found themselves beset with questions and requests, and reported spending considerable time trying to keep up with rumors and the problems rumors generated. Rumors made town meetings very difficult for base leadership. Because spouses had their own information networks, they often questioned the veracity of information presented at town meetings. Additionally, the impact of the media, especially CNN, was enormous, providing another source of information about conditions in the Gulf and at home. Leadership joked in interviews that they tuned in to CNN to find out what was happening in the war.

Financial Impacts

Financial problems plagued almost every family involved in the deployment; problems generally fell into one of five categories:

- Loss of Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) and uncertainty over taxes
- Travel advance from Finance
- Loss of income
- Additional child care costs
- High telephone bills.

The loss of BAS was a huge blow financially to many families, especially the enlisted families. Many did not realize they were going to lose the BAS until after the servicemember deployed and were unprepared for smaller checks. Many also did not understand the purpose of BAS. For officers, uncertainty over their tax obligations for 1991 has become a significant problem. When Congress decided to make the first $500 of the paychecks for officers non-taxable, no taxes were taken out of paychecks for several months. Many people knew that the additional money in their check would probably have to be used to pay taxes and wisely put it in the bank. However, many others did not anticipate the future tax liability and spent at least part of the additional money they received.

Eventually, servicemembers received increased supplemental pay for Family Separation and Hazardous Duty. Dual-military couples generally did well financially while other servicemembers reported that the pay issues eventually balanced out. However, many reported a net loss overall and were angry about losing money while putting their lives on the line for their country. In any event, uncertainty over pay issues was a major source of concern for both servicemembers and spouses.

At the time of the deployment, some active duty did not have sufficient personal funds available to take with them. To alleviate this problem, Finance offered travel advances on the mobility line. However, some active duty did not understand that the money was a loan rather than a grant. In addition, some active duty felt pressured into taking the cash when they really didn't need it. The travel advance was helpful to many people, but it was also confusing to people who didn't know it was a loan and were not prepared to pay it back later.

Loss of income often came in two ways for families. First, some active duty had a second job that they had to give up when they were deployed. For many of these families, the second job allowed the family to make ends meet. Without this income, they had trouble paying their bills. The second loss of income came when spouses had to give up jobs because the active duty member had provided the child care. Without the servicemember available to provide child care, it became too expensive for many spouses to work outside of the home. Many spouses who lived and worked off base had relied on the servicemember to get their children to

and from the base child care center. Some of these spouses reported giving up their jobs, reducing their hours, or incurring higher costs to purchase child care in the civilian community.

Spouses who continued to work or to go to school after the servicemember deployed incurred unusually high child care bills. They also found it nearly impossible to obtain child care on base, because the child care center was overburdened by accommodating new or increased needs of spouses as well as expanded work schedules of active duty personnel who were not deployed.

High telephone bills were a large problem for many families. Once the telephone system was in place in Saudi Arabia, servicemembers found it relatively easy to call home whenever they wanted. Since most servicemembers were not billed for their calls until they came home, they had no idea how much the calls were costing. Thus, it was not unusual to hear of telephone bills over $1,000 for the duration of the deployment. The use of pre-purchased telephone cards helped alleviate these problems where they were used.

Children

Children responded to the deployment in many ways. Some children regressed, exhibiting behaviors of a younger child. Others became more independent and self-reliant, taking on more responsibilities at home. The surveys asked parents about changes their children may have exhibited before, during and after the deployment. Exhibits III-3 through III-5 on the following pages present the reported numbers of children who exhibited different behaviors.

Exhibit III-3, following this page, presents the findings for children of civilian spouses. Many behaviors increased significantly during the deployment phase, including becoming more dependent or independent, more withdrawn, or more of a discipline problem. Several of these behaviors, such as dependence/independence and discipline problems, did not return to pre-deployment levels in the months after the servicemember returned.

EXHIBIT III-3
BEHAVIORS EXHIBITED BY CHILDREN OF CIVILIAN SPOUSES

Behaviors	Before	During	After
Learning Disability	28	29	28
More Dependent	19	143	33
Withdrawn/Distant	13	92	16
Serious Health Problems	7	28	10
Do Poorly in School	12	54	8
Drug/Alcohol Problems	3	2	2
More Independent	17	115	77
Trouble with Law	4	13	5
Discipline Problems	28	121	35
Nightmares	14	97	18
Trouble Sleeping	12	135	19
Eating Problems	4	28	9

The age groups that experienced the most behavior changes and sustained those changes into the post-deployment period were children in the 3-5 year age group and the 6-9 year age group. Children 10-12 years old and teenagers also experienced changes during the deployment phase, but those behaviors, except for increased independence, were less likely to carry-over into the post-deployment period.

Children of dual-military couples (Exhibit III-4, following this page) also had dramatic changes in the types of behaviors exhibited during the deployment. Several of these behaviors continued to increase in the post-deployment period:

- Dependence
- Being withdrawn or distant
- Independence
- Discipline problems
- Nightmares
- Trouble sleeping.

EXHIBIT III-4
BEHAVIORS EXHIBITED BY CHILDREN OF DUAL-MILITARY COUPLES

Behaviors	Before	During	After
Learning Disability	5	7	5
More Dependent	3	17	40
Withdrawn/Distant	3	11	12
Serious Health Problems	5	5	4
Do Poorly in School	2	14	8
Drug/Alcohol Problems	0	0	0
More Independent	7	32	43
Trouble with Law	0	1	0
Discipline Problems	2	15	17
Nightmares	4	20	24
Trouble Sleeping	4	24	28
Eating Problems	1	6	4

Clearly these children had a difficult time dealing with the absence of their parents. With many dual-military couples having young children (under 5 years of age), it is not surprising that the separation was apparently very frightening for these children.

Children of single parents (Exhibit III-5, following this page) may have had the most difficult time during the deployment. Not only did the number of children exhibiting particular behaviors increase during the deployment, but in all instances except one (drug/alcohol problems), the number of children exhibiting these behaviors after the deployment remained significantly higher than prior to the deployment.

The children whose behavior appeared to have changed the most were in the 6-9 year old and 10-12 year old ranges. However, teenagers also exhibited a large number of changes which extended into the post-deployment phase.

EXHIBIT III-5
BEHAVIORS EXHIBITED BY CHILDREN OF SINGLE PARENTS

Behaviors	Before	During	After
Learning Disability	20	32	26
More Dependent	24	51	99
Withdrawn/Distant	12	49	49
Serious Health Problems	9	14	7
Do Poorly in School	16	64	33
Drug/Alcohol Problems	1	3	1
More Independent	16	67	97
Trouble with Law	3	4	6
Discipline Problems	17	58	68
Nightmares	11	58	41
Trouble Sleeping	10	66	47
Eating Problems	8	29	15

The data on children of civilian spouses is supported by statements from many service providers who told of children being fearful that their parents would not return from the Persian Gulf. Spouses also expressed considerable concern about their children's welfare and their need for support. Exhibits III-6 and III-7, following this page, display selected behavior changes for each of the three groups and across the three periods of time. As can be seen, children of single parents and dual-military couples were more likely to continue exhibiting certain behaviors than their counterparts from traditional families.

Children of single parents and dual-military couples were likely to have left the area of the base; and service providers reported that they did not deal with their problems during the deployment phase. Caregivers of children of single parents and dual-military couples apparently received almost no information about Air Force services or programs, or information from the squadrons. Although some squadrons asked people who were leaving the area, or whose children were leaving the area, to provide an address where they could be reached, many people did not leave this information and the squadron had no way of keeping them informed. On the other hand, many squadrons did not make an attempt to keep caregivers informed about the servicemember.

EXHIBIT III-6
CHANGES EXHIBITED IN CHILDREN BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM

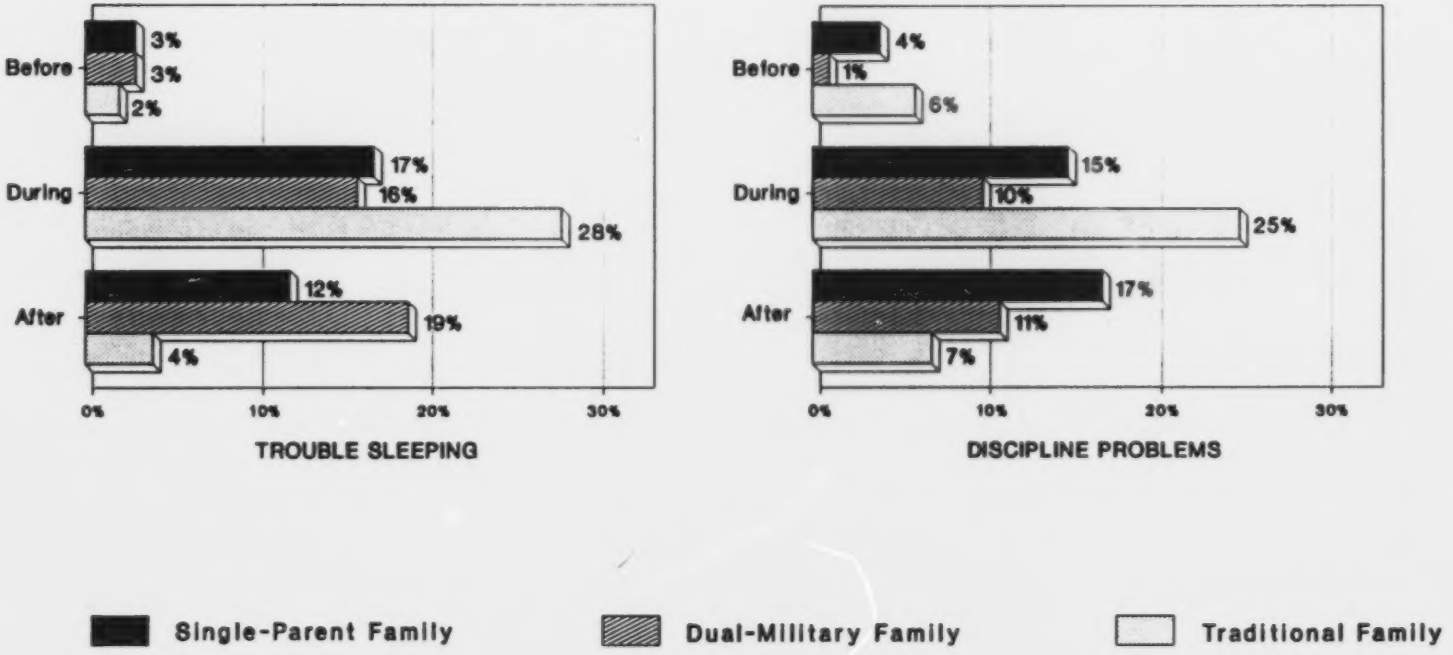
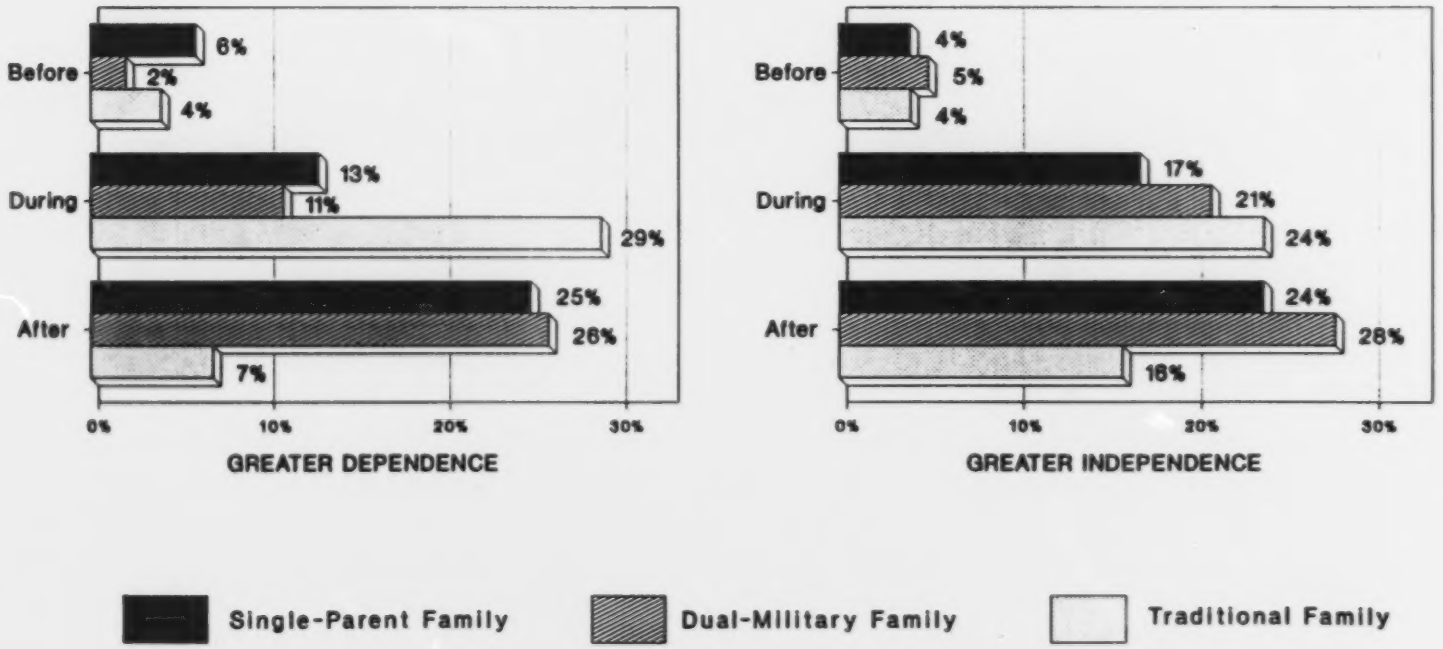


EXHIBIT III-7
CHANGES EXHIBITED IN CHILDREN
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM



III-22

In focus groups, youth discussed their concerns about their parent's ability to cope and own need to be more independent and responsible. Several indicated they wanted to be kept informed of what was going on with their servicemember parent and to get more direct information from squadrons. Rumors were a major problem for youth, who often heard information secondhand or thirdhand from adults.

2.2 Needs for Services and Communication

Needs for Services

All three respondent groups were asked about needs for services in the six months prior to the deployment, during the deployment and since the deployment. Spouses were asked questions about their own needs, and single parents and dual-military couples were asked to respond for their children. Exhibits III-8 to III-10 indicate the needs of these three groups before, during and after the deployment; only those needs that had the largest number of respondents or the greatest change in service need over time are presented.

Exhibit III-8, following this page, presents the service needs of spouses of deployed servicemembers. Many of the services show very large increases from before the deployment to the time period during the deployment. For example, the need for emergency phone calls increased by 640% and the need for support groups went up 504%. The increase in service needs points out the challenge for service providers, especially the FSC, Child Care, and Red Cross.

Exhibit III-9, which also appears on the following page, presents the same information for children of deployed single parents. Needs that saw large increases included transportation, emergency health care, individual counseling and CHAMPUS information. The need for some of these services -- such as sports/recreation programs, after-school programs and individual counseling -- has remained higher than it was prior to the deployment. These continuing needs indicate that some changes in family functioning have carried over into the post-deployment phase, as have some residual effects of the deployment experience.

EXHIBIT III-8
SERVICES NEEDED BY SPOUSES OF DEPLOYED SERVICEMEMBERS

Services	Before	During	After
Tax assistance services	5	55	14
Emergency phone calls	5	37	7
Emergency health care	16	48	21
Adult recreation	32	40	35
Sports/recreation for children	30	46	38
CHAMPUS information	33	82	46
Drop-in child care	25	55	30
Full-day child care	22	36	25
Before school child care	7	13	8
After school child care	12	22	14
Parenting training	5	10	2
Support groups	23	139	19
Individual counseling	6	30	9

Note: The responses are based on 316 spouses participating in the survey.

EXHIBIT III-9
SERVICES NEEDED BY CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED SINGLE PARENTS

Services	Before	During	After
Support groups	7	35	10
Transportation	21	33	20
Emergency phone calls	1	25	2
Medical care	32	96	34
Emergency health care	3	26	9
Individual counseling	10	31	21
Sports/recreation	27	38	36
CHAMPUS information	18	45	23
Educational assistance/ tutoring	2	19	9
Social activities	19	26	21
After school programs	19	24	24
Financial assistance	6	15	10

Note: The responses are based on 263 single parents participating in the survey.

Unlike single parents, dual-military couples (Exhibit III-10) indicated their children had few service needs. During the deployment, the need for select services doubled or tripled. In most instances, however, the need for these services has returned to the pre-deployment level.

EXHIBIT III-10
SERVICES NEEDED BY CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED DUAL-MILITARY MEMBERS

Services	Before	During	After
Support groups	0	7	2
Medical care	13	42	13
Emergency health care	3	17	3
CHAMPUS information	12	36	9
Social activities	2	10	4

Note: The responses are based on 96 dual-military members participating in the survey.

When individuals identified a need, they were asked to indicate who met that need, such as an Air Force agency, a civilian agency, a relative or a friend. The needs of spouses of active duty were more likely to be met by an Air Force agency rather than an off-base service provider. The needs of children of single parents and dual-military couples were more likely to be met by a relative or by a civilian agency; although some needs, such as medical care, were most likely to be met by the Air Force. Single parents and dual-military couples were also more likely to indicate that their children's need had not been met at all than were spouses of active duty. Again, this is probably related to the fact that many children of single parents and dual military lived some distance from the base during the deployment.

Communication Needs

One of the biggest issues discussed during the site visits was the need to keep in touch with the active duty member in Southwest Asia and with the family at home. Because of the sophisticated telephone systems available today, once

the telephone system was in place in Saudi Arabia, communication was easier than it had been at any other time in history. Although somewhat rare, some spouses and active duty told of talking almost daily by telephone, in addition to sending letters, packages and video tapes. Exhibit III-11 presents the average number of calls, letters, packages and videos sent per month between the family and the servicemember.

EXHIBIT III-11
AVERAGE LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION MONTHLY

	Spouses	Single Parents	Dual-Military Couples
	%	%	%
CALLS			
≤ 1	19	12	20
2	27	48	39
3-4	34	23	24
≥ 5	21	17	18
LETTERS (Spouses)			
≤ 7	26		
8-15	26		
16-30	39		
≥ 31	10		
LETTERS (Singles & Duals)			
≤ 2		22	35
3-4		30	18
5-10		27	14
≥ 11		22	34
PACKAGES			
< 1	10	36	29
1	40	39	35
2	19	25	35
3	31	-	-
VIDEOS			
< 1	62	86	79
1	27	14	21
2	11	-	-

Over 50% of the spouses had at least three telephone conversations per month with their spouse in the Gulf, and many individuals reported making significantly more calls per month. Single parents and dual-military couples were most likely to have made one to two calls per month to their children. Many squadron commanders and first sergeants found that these calls greatly complicated their lives, becoming a daily source of rumors and distractions with problems at home. Spouses, as well as single parents and dual-military couples, considered them a godsend; as one spouse said, "There is nothing as reassuring as hearing his voice."

Nearly one-half of the spouses wrote at least 16 letters per month to their spouse in Saudi Arabia. Single parents varied widely in their letter writing, with the largest group writing three to four letters per month. Dual-military couples tended to be either very low-level letter writers (two or fewer per month) or frequent writers (11 or more per month) than the other two groups.

Although respondents were less likely to send packages or videos than to make phone calls or send letters, a large percentage of spouses (40%) sent one package a month, and 31% of the spouses sent three packages a month. In addition, 38% of the spouses indicated that they sent one or two video tapes per month. While few single parents and dual-military couples sent video tapes, 74% of single parents and 71% of dual-military couples reported receiving one or more packages per month. Squadron leaders indicated that videos from home were a powerful morale booster for the troops.

The mail service created problems for both servicemembers and family members. Letters often took up to three weeks or more to arrive, leaving people with large gaps of time without communication. This often created fears over what a family member might be doing at home, or what the servicemember was doing in Saudi Arabia. Although the slowness of the mail service was tempered by the ability to communicate by phone, both active duty and family members said that letters were really the lifeline to the family because of the costs of telephone calls.

Another issue surrounding mail service had to do with the "Any Servicemember" mail. Although everyone appreciated the cards and letters from the public, the overwhelming amount of mail sent to Saudi Arabia clogged the mail channels making it even harder to receive family mail.

2.3 Use of Informal Support Systems

Respondents were asked how likely they were to contact different people or agencies for support during the deployment. The list included such people as co-workers, religious groups, family members, friends and squadron senior spouses. Spouses indicated they were most likely to contact:

- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors.

It is not surprising that friends and family members are the first wave of the support system. Spouses were also somewhat likely to contact co-workers, their employer or supervisor and other military spouses. However, they were least likely to contact:

- Local civilian support services
- Squadron senior spouses
- Religious groups
- Family Support Center
- Other base support agencies.

Although the data show that these agencies and individuals were contacted when a problem arose, they were not the first resource accessed by spouses to help them cope with their situations.

During focus groups, spouses often discussed the close bonds they had with other spouses in their squadron during the deployment. Many spouses indicated that they could not have made it through that time period without the support of other spouses.

Single parents and dual-military couples were asked about how much support their children received from various individuals and organizations during the deployment. Not surprisingly, most children received support from family members, such as grandparents, siblings, aunts/uncles or the parents themselves. Both groups also indicated that their children received support from school counselors and teachers.

When youth were asked in focus groups who they used as a support, they often spoke of one special friend. Many youth, especially older teens, generally kept to themselves because they did not want to talk about the deployment or what might happen to their parent. However, other children participated in support groups at school. The support groups were very helpful in alleviating stress and affirming that individuals' concerns and fears were not unique.

2.4 Services Provided By the Air Force

Overall, the focus group and interview respondents at the three sites expressed great pride and satisfaction with how the entire Air Force community had pulled together to meet needs during the Persian Gulf crisis. Base agencies were credited with making exceptional efforts to respond. Squadrons also received much praise for their support to families, but these evaluations varied widely from squadron to squadron.

A wide array of services were provided by the Family Support Center, other base agencies, and local schools, as well as squadrons. For most agencies, there was a dramatic increase in the use of services at the time of the deployment(s) and during Desert Shield. The demand for services then decreased (but did not return to normal level of use) during Desert Storm since the "conflict was

anticlimactic and we (FSC, in particular) were prepared". Service providers also noted that most families had learned to cope by this time.

Family Support Center (FSC)

The FSC quickly became the hub of the base network of family support during Desert Shield/Storm at the three bases visited. Their efforts won unanimous praise from all of the individuals interviewed -- from base commanders, squadron commanders, first sergeants, and other service providers to spouses and servicemembers. In particular, the experience appears to have transformed the relationship between the FSC and the squadrons, who became acutely aware of just how valuable the FSC could be to them. As one squadron commander put it, "without them we would have been dead in the water". A group of first sergeants characterized the FSC as their "lifeline" during the crisis.

During the deployment, FSCs provided their usual range of services, but provided expanded services in the areas of:

- o Telephone information and referral service (hot line)
- o Financial counseling
- o Walk-in counseling and information and referral
- o Support groups
- o Volunteer program.

These services were expanded as the number of individuals needing services increased and became known via contacts with the FSCs, spouse support groups, and/or volunteers. Other services which FSC directors indicated were provided included:

- o Briefings
- o Information packets for families
- o Cards/videos/packages sent to deployed servicemembers

- Logos or Desert Shield/Storm buttons
- Weekly newsletter
- Speakers at squadron events
- Inservice training to schools
- Social events (e.g., holiday dinners or parties).

All of these services as well as other programs on base were publicized by the FSCs through the base newspaper, flyers, marquees, and base cable stations.

In addition, FSCs coordinated with base and community agencies to provide services. At at least one base, the FSC and other base agencies met monthly to discuss issues of concern and plan programs. These meetings were intended to reduce duplication of services during Desert Shield/Storm, as well as to organize base-wide activities. Some of the organizations with which FSCs coordinated included:

- JAG
- Finance
- Mental Health
- Chapel
- Child Development Center (CDC)
- Youth Center
- Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR)
- Local schools
- Squadrons.

Examples of the programs that resulted from FSC-initiated coordination activities include: "MAD" days, or four free hours of respite child care at the CDC, and support groups for spouses and children run by mental health staff at the FSC.

Volunteers also had a vital role in assisting the FSCs. Large numbers of nondeployed active duty, reservists, spouses, and retired servicemembers offered to assist and performed a variety of duties, including:

- Helping with car problems and home repairs
- Providing child care
- Baking
- Assisting in on-base agencies' offices
- Answering telephone/hot lines
- Serving as translators.

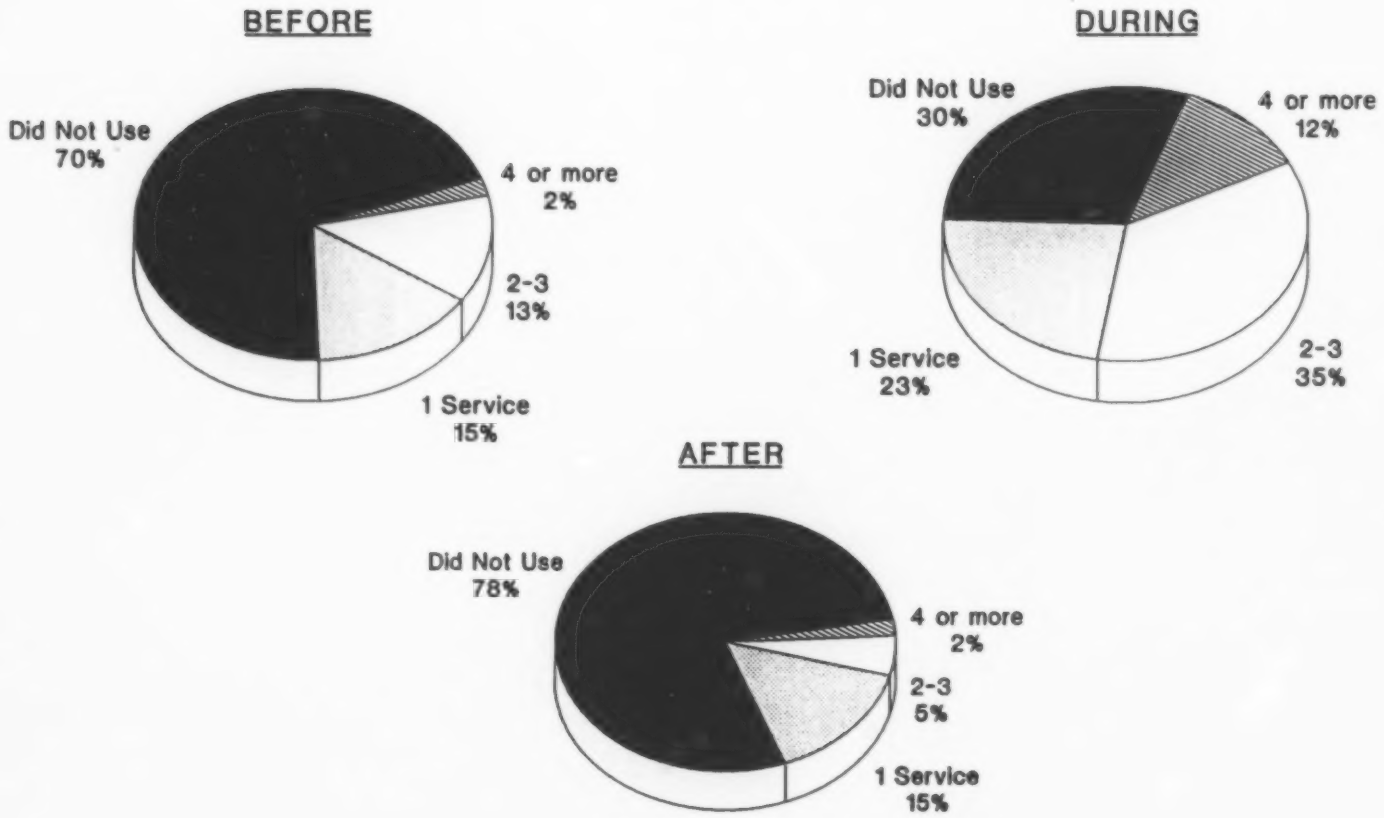
The use of the FSC by spouses increased dramatically during Desert Shield/Storm (see Exhibit III-12, following this page). Based on the interview data and a consensus of focus group responses, the services used most often were:

- Air Force Aid Society
- Desert Shield/Storm activities (especially briefings, cards, and videos)
- Financial counseling
- Support groups
- Counseling
- Telephone helpline which offered information and referrals on a variety of services (e.g., baby-sitters, garage repairs).

Air Force Aid, which is frequently housed at and supported by the FSC, was praised for their quick response to financial needs and their flexibility in adjusting loan guidelines to fit the unique problems caused by the deployment.

Those spouses who sought support and assistance from the FSC described the FSC as extremely helpful and as having given them "a lot more confidence that they (themselves) could take care of things". Even though most spouses had not used FSC services personally, most knew the FSC was available whenever they

EXHIBIT III-12
NUMBER OF FSC SERVICES USED BY SPOUSES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM



needed, having been kept informed about FSC services. A few spouses expressed concern that the presence of Air Force spouses from their unit (who served as FSC staff or volunteers) made them uncomfortable bringing issues to the FSC.

Squadron leaders characterized the help they received from FSCs in three ways. First, it was an alternate source of information and support that helped alleviate the overwhelming demands on the first sergeant, squadron commander and their spouses. This role was particularly crucial for units without strong family support mechanisms of their own. As one commander put it, "They kept spouses from being a problem for commanders." Secondly, units frequently referred family members to the FSC for assistance. Perhaps most importantly, however, the FSC staff played a critical consultation role for unit leaders, supplying checklists and pamphlets, speaking at unit briefings and support groups, advising on organizing unit support groups, volunteer networks, and family morale activities, and linking units to other available services.

In the interviews with three FSC directors, the directors identified two areas for future improvement. The FSC directors felt there was insufficient communication with base and squadron commanders prior to the deployment. Had there been communication, the FSCs could have provided greater assistance with deployment preparations, particularly for single parents and dual-military couples. Similarly, strong communication with squadrons during Desert Shield/Storm is essential to FSC effectiveness in responding to questions about rumors. Secondly, several groups -- foreign-born spouses, parents of servicemembers, caregivers of children of single parents and dual-military couples, and off-base families in civilian housing -- tended to be under-served, and thus will require strong outreach efforts during future deployments.

Base Agencies

During the deployment, base agencies developed new programs as well as expanded existing services. The services provided included:

- o Prayer services, special worship services (Chapel)

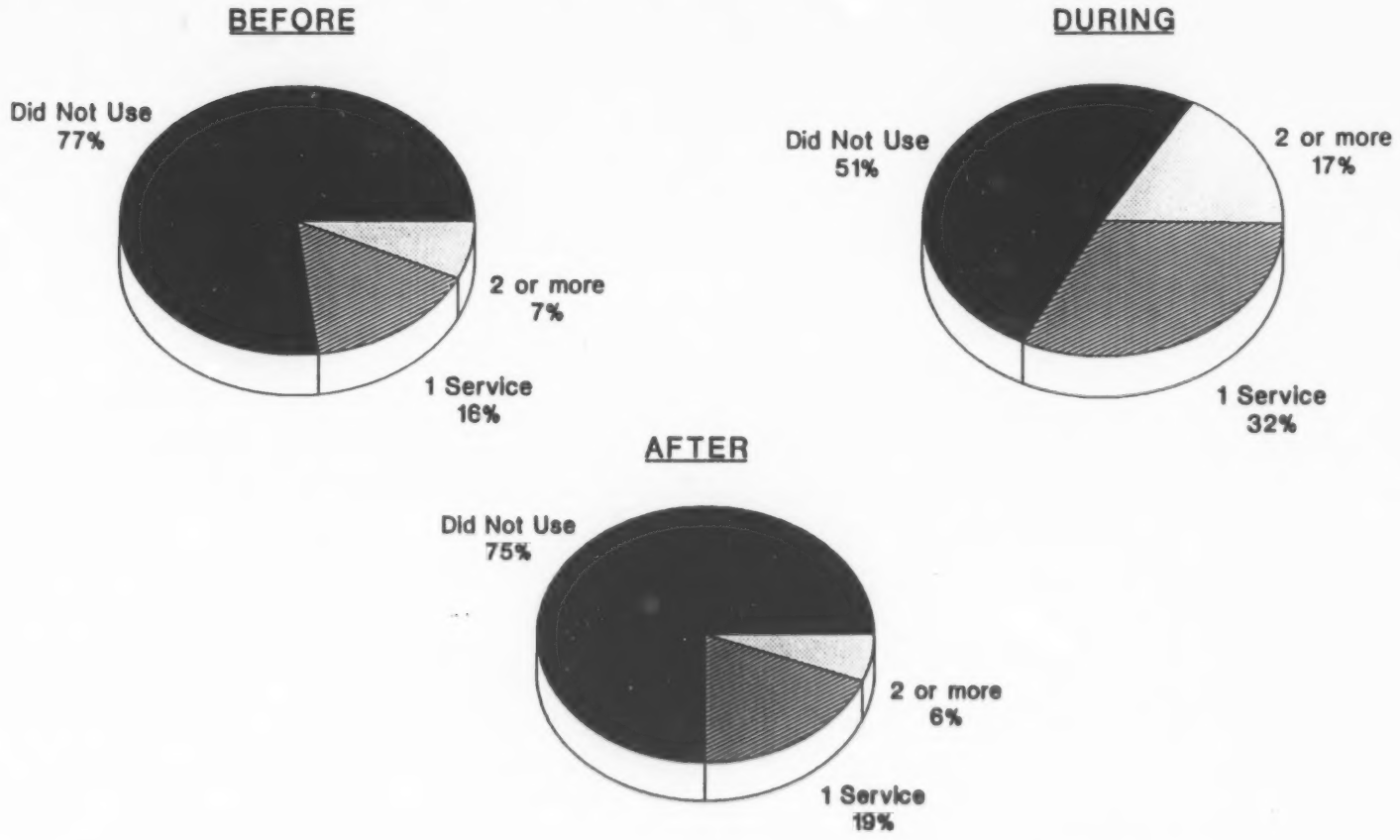
- o Dinners (Chapel)
- o Support groups (Chapel, Mental Health)
- o Free and fee-based child care/emergency babysitting (Chapel, CDC, Family Advocacy)
- o Consultation
  - Trained day care providers (CDC)
  - Briefed commanders on grief support (Mental Health)
  - Stress management for spouses (Mental Health, Red Cross)
  - Presentations to squadrons (Family Advocacy)
- o Counseling/crisis management (Mental Health, Red Cross)
- o Special programs for children (CDC, Youth Activities, Mental Health).

There was a dramatic increase in the use of base agencies' services, as reflected in the spouse telephone interview data (see Exhibit III-13, following this page). Based on the spouse data and focus group responses, the agencies most heavily used were:

- o Red Cross
- o Chapel programs
- o Child care (especially Child Development Center).

Both squadron leaders and spouses relied on the Red Cross to assist in determining appropriate reasons for the early return of deployed servicemembers and to verify medical emergencies. Their efforts were seen as crucial. In addition, the "step up" of Youth Activities programs for children was considered by spouses to have been helpful. However, some spouses and single parents were interested in additional programs, such as Big Brother/Big Sister programs and a support line for children. Some youth also suggested more activity programs would have been helpful. Spouses also felt the Chapel had good programs, especially the dinners.

EXHIBIT III-13
NUMBER OF ON-BASE AGENCIES USED BY SPOUSES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM



Almost all of the service providers reported that "agencies were able to work together to get the job done". Relationships between agencies were good and "everyone bent over backwards" to assist families.

However, service providers had difficulties providing services for the following reasons:

- Understaffed (CDC)
- Space limitations (CDC, Mental Health)
- Stigma (Mental Health)
- Families' financial status (CDC)
- Transportation (Youth Activities)
- No shows, especially spouses and older children (Chapel, Mental Health, Youth Activities).

It was also recognized that families who lived off base were not getting the information and services needed.

In order to be better prepared in the future, service providers indicated they need special training and/or information in the following areas:

- Death notification and family separation (Chaplain)
- Dealing with children's fears during war (CDC)
- Grief therapy (Mental Health)
- "Changes that children go through"/children's problems (Youth Activities)
- Handling grief (Youth Activities, CDC).

Several service providers reported that they would have been ill-prepared if faced with a mass casualty situation.

In addition, Mental Health (as well as squadron leaders and Red Cross) were particularly burdened by a relatively small but significant number of spouses who sought persistently to have their spouses kept or sent home. While some cases were clearly legitimate, many of these spouses were seen as either manipulative or lacking an understanding of the realities of Air Force deployments and screening procedures. Clearer criteria and better education of families were suggested. In addition, it was strongly suggested that the wartime role of Mental Health with families needed to be clearly defined and appropriate resource manuals and training made available to Mental Health staff.

According to service providers, a mobility plan and interagency network are also needed to allow service providers to prepare earlier and to respond more efficiently. The plan would clarify the roles of agencies and specify the key information to be provided by the Air Force. Service providers indicated a need to receive deployment information (i.e., departure date) and information on financial implications for servicemembers and their families as soon as possible prior to deployment. More information on operations during the deployment was also viewed as desirable to enable agencies to be more effective in their support role.

Schools

The description of schools' efforts are relevant only for the three bases visited. Schools were located on site at two of the bases, one a DoD school and the other a section 6 school. School representatives interviewed at the third base were from public schools near the base.

Schools attempted to prepare for the deployment by offering training to teachers and anticipating needs for counseling. Hence additional group counseling and individual counseling were offered. Support groups for military children were also established at a DoD school and public schools with a high concentration of military children.

During Desert Shield/Storm, schools attempted to offer support, recreation/respite, and information. While teachers, principals, and counselors

provided support and talked to children, they also attempted to provide stability for children by "maintaining business as usual". There was also an effort to provide fun activities to give children an opportunity for emotional release. Whenever there were concerns about children's behavior or performance, conferences were held with parents. Finally, controlling and addressing rumors were considered important. Assemblies, newsletters, and rumor control boxes were several mechanisms used for this purpose. The base commander and FSC staff were in regular contact with the schools, and special counseling activities were set up with Mental Health.

Overall, spouses, active duty, and children felt that schools had been helpful to children, except for those children attending schools where military families were a minority. These schools provided few special services and in some instances were reportedly "insensitive" to military children's needs and situations. While children often sought out and talked to teachers about their problems and feelings, some children expressed reluctance in attending support groups. Many children did not want to talk about the war and felt the support groups would be too stressful, even though most who did attend found them helpful.

School counselors and principals expressed concern that they were not adequately prepared for all of the changes in children's needs and behaviors. They were interested in training and information in these areas, including reunion adjustment, in order to be better prepared for future deployments. There was also an interest in working more closely with other agencies to address parents' and children's needs collectively, rather than separately.

Squadrons

Squadrons clearly were the most important formal source of information and support for family members during the deployment. Perceptions of the level and quality of that support varied widely, however, depending on the squadron and where the family lived. Squadron commanders, first sergeants and senior spouses all agreed that many valuable lessons were learned during Desert Shield/Storm that

could help squadrons provide more consistent, effective family support during future deployments.

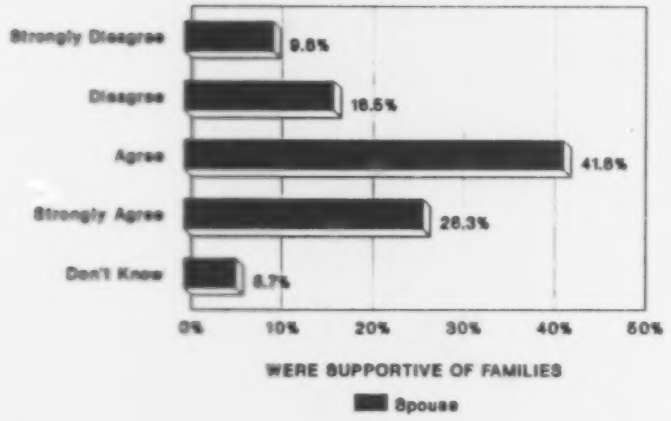
Squadrons responded to families' needs in a variety of ways during Desert Shield/Storm including:

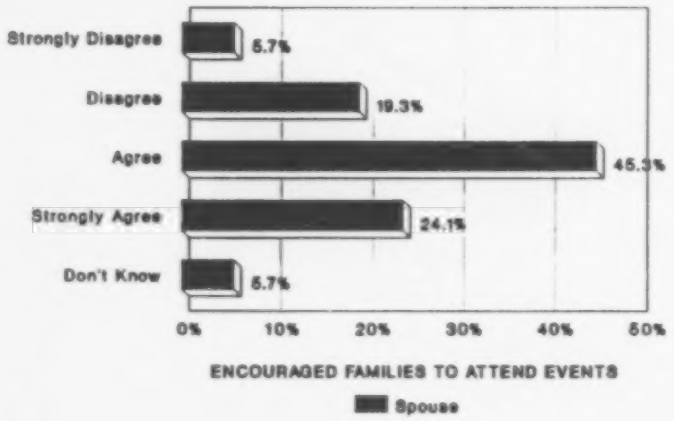
- Sponsoring family support groups
- Preparing video tapes to send to and from the Persian Gulf
- Establishing telephone networks
- Offering ready access to a leader via a home telephone number
- Preparing and distributing news releases or newsletters
- Providing informative briefings
- Contacting spouses, in some cases on a weekly basis
- Sponsoring youth support groups
- Offering support via squadron commanders' wives
- Assisting with car and home repairs
- Taking mail to and from the Persian Gulf.

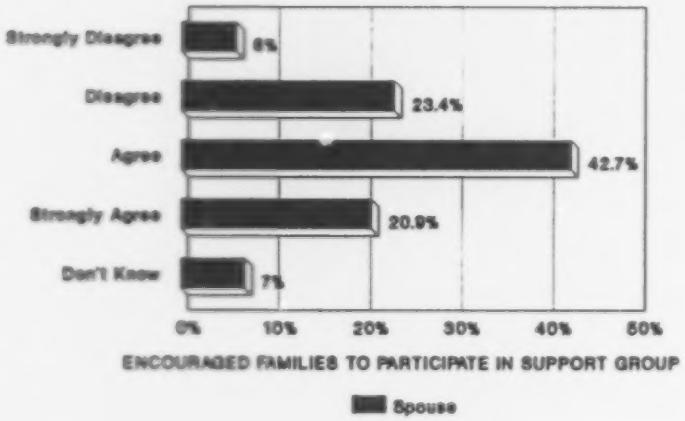
Not all of these services were provided by every squadron. Some were extremely active while, in some cases, few if any supports were provided.

To examine perceptions about squadrons' efforts and support, spouses, single parents, and dual-military couples were asked four questions in the telephone interviews about whether their squadron leaders were supportive of families, encouraged attendance at squadron events, encouraged participation in a support group, and provided important information about Desert Shield/Storm events (see Exhibits III-14 and III-15, following this page). Sixty-eight percent of spouses, 61% of single parents, and only 53% of dual-military couples felt their squadron leaders had been supportive of families during Desert Shield/Storm.

EXHIBIT III-14
PERCEPTIONS OF SQUADRONS SUPPORTIVE EFFORTS DURING DESERT SHIELD/STORM







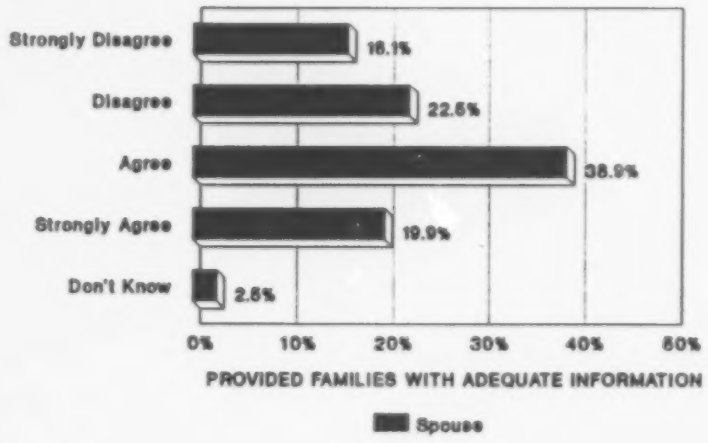


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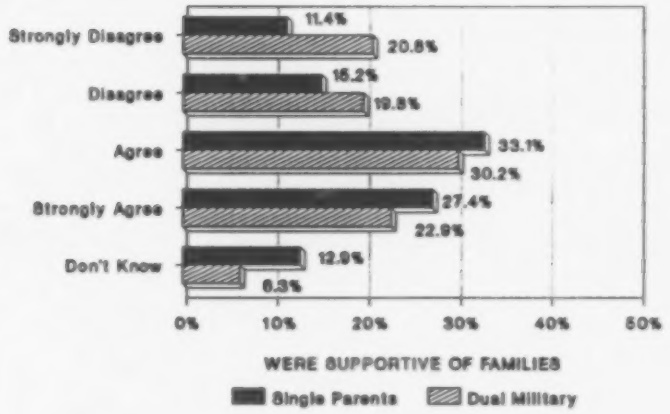
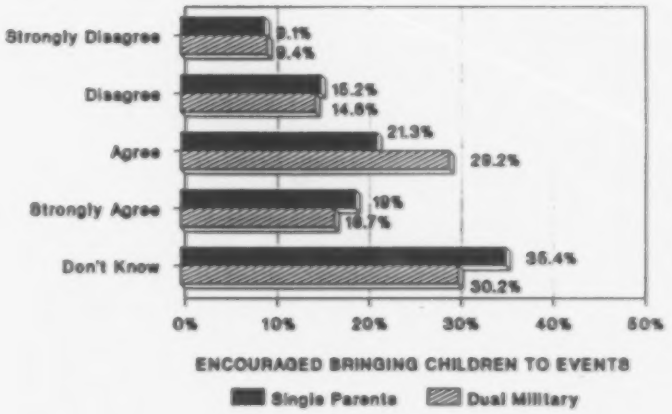
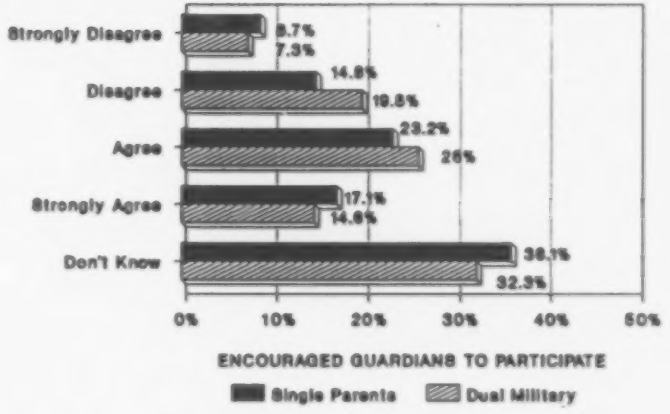
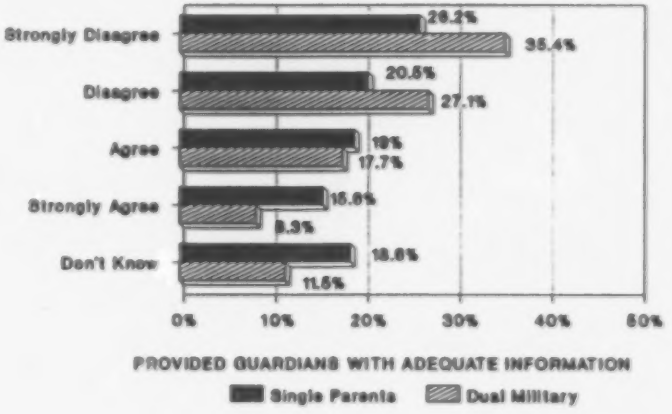
EXHIBIT III-15
PERCEPTIONS OF SQUADRONS SUPPORTIVE EFFORTS DURING DESERT SHIELD/STORM









While perceptions of support appeared to vary depending upon whether a pre-deployment briefing was provided, much of the variation in perceptions may be attributed to the variability in the support provided by squadrons, as reported in the focus groups and leadership interviews. Based on discussions with spouses, squadrons who exhibited "great" support provided several of the aforementioned services. Pilot squadrons were cited as an example. In contrast, other squadron leaders did not provide any services or contact spouses, and hence to spouses appeared to exhibit "no support". Large squadrons, such as maintenance squadrons, were sometimes described in this manner, as were squadrons which only deployed a small number of their personnel. The variability in support was of great concern to spouses and to servicemembers.

Over 60% of the spouses interviewed reported that squadrons had encouraged family members to attend squadron events and participate in support groups. While 79% of officers' wives reported squadrons were supportive of support groups, only 47% of young enlisted wives reported this to be the case. In the focus groups, spouses who were active in support groups reported that there was a "strong" bond between the wives and that the groups served as a "life saver". Young enlisted spouses -- who were most likely to have problems coping -- tended not to use the squadron groups. Some enlisted spouses reported that a support group was not available to them.

Because of numerous rumors and continuing worries about the safety and welfare of the servicemembers, spouses were constantly seeking more information from squadrons. Sixty percent of the spouses interviewed said their squadron leaders had provided adequate information on Desert Shield/Storm events; however, 39% did not agree. Spouses' dissatisfaction with the information did not appear to be related to the stress they experienced, but rather to the amount of information received. Some spouses complained that they received little information, especially those living off base or in low-mobility squadrons. Others were dissatisfied with the amount, accuracy, and appropriateness of the information given at briefings, especially the first briefing. Furthermore, some spouses and active duty complained about the manner in which leaders spoke to the wives. Because of these experiences, a number of spouses did not attend additional briefings given by the squadrons. On the other hand, many older

spouses were upset by the rudeness and inappropriate complaints directed at leaders in the briefings.

The concerns of single parents and dual-military couples revolved around the welfare of their child(ren) and support given to the primary caregiver or guardian. Only 40% of single parents and 46% of dual-military couples interviewed believed that squadrons had encouraged children and guardians to participate in squadron events. Fifty-two percent of single parents who received a pre-deployment briefing stated that squadron leaders had encouraged participation compared to 42% of single parents who did not receive a pre-deployment briefing and said "don't know" to questions on these issues. Thus, pre-deployment briefings may have served to inform some single parents of efforts intended by squadrons and agencies to support their families. Given the vast distance, it is not surprising that many single parents and dual-military couples were not aware of the type and level of support being offered. Furthermore, since most children of single parents and dual-military couples moved to a location 150 miles or more away from the base, support may not have been offered. Commanders and single parents confirmed that family members and guardians were rarely contacted, nor was a support group available for guardians. This fact may explain why 49% of single parents and 63% of dual-military couples did not feel adequate information about Desert Shield/Storm events was given to their child(ren)'s guardian. Females were somewhat more likely than males to report that adequate information had not been provided.

In the interviews, commanders and first sergeants identified two issues which required considerable time and attention during Desert Shield/Storm. These issues were:

- Morale of servicemembers and spouses, which was influenced by:
  - Uncertainty about family/airman welfare
  - Concerns about family functioning
  - Rumors
  - Infidelity

- Slow mail service
- Animosity between deployed and nondeployed
- Confusion about Air Force rotation plans
- Uncertainty about length of deployment

o Families' lack of experience with separations and their needs for support and assistance, which resulted in:

- Preponderance of calls for information, especially about rumors
- Requests for assistance with personal problems and routine household chores
- Attempts by wives to get spouses returned early.

Leaders, service providers and spouses also described tensions between families who had a family member deployed to the Persian Gulf and families who did not. Servicemembers who did not deploy often worked longer hours to cover the jobs of servicemembers who were deployed. Many also volunteered to help spouses with repair and maintenance problems. As a result, these servicemembers spent less time with their families resulting in considerable stress at home. Because support groups and other family support efforts were focused almost exclusively on spouses of deployed servicemembers, these families did not feel supported by the base or their units. Alternatively, some spouses of deployed servicemembers felt that spouses of nondeployed servicemembers did not understand their problems. As a result, resentment and misunderstandings sometimes created tension between people in the same squadron or between people who had been friends prior to the deployment.

Policies on early returns was another area which created problems for leadership. Families did not know or understand the criteria which made a servicemember eligible for early return. For example, some spouses were surprised when the birth of a child was not sufficient cause for their husband to be brought home. Although the percentage of spouses who tried to get their husbands home was small, leaders indicated that considerable time was required addressing these families' requests. Some commanders indicated that better

screening pre-deployment could have reduced the number of early returns (which were relatively few, but costly and time consuming).

Leaders identified a number of suggestions to reduce problems in future deployments:

- Briefings for spouses to formalize expectations by the Air Force and to educate spouses on the realities of deployment
- Information and training on household and financial management to prepare spouses to manage family finances and affairs during separations and deployments
- More aggressive efforts to keep families informed and stay ahead of rumors
- Information on reunion issues to be disseminated to both leadership and families
- Greater support for individuals living off base
- Clarification of deployment screening and early return policies
- Training for commanders' wives to assist them in being better able to handle spouses' problems and concerns.

The overall lesson which leadership learned was conveyed by one squadron commander in the following words: "It is important that we learn and be better prepared to handle family concerns in the future. Operation Desert Shield/Storm really brought home how important they are in the Air Force today."

3. REUNION AND POST-DEPLOYMENT

While the reunion and post-deployment period probably received the least attention from leadership and service providers, it too had its own set of problems and issues. Many people assumed that when the servicemember came home, everything would return to pre-deployment status. For many families this was not the case, instead there were changes that affected and continue to impact family

functioning. This section discusses how the deployment impacted families and how families have readjusted to being back together.

3.1 Impact of the Deployment on Marital Relationships

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of their marital relationships on a ten point scale from "very poor" to "extremely good" for the six month period prior to the deployment and the period of time since the servicemember returned home. The two ratings were then compared to arrive at an index of change in the quality of the relationship.

The majority of civilian spouses gave high ratings to their marital quality in the six months prior to the deployment and since the servicemember returned. Between the two periods, 55% of the spouses had no change in their ratings, 17% indicated a negative change, and 29% indicated that their marital quality improved.

Dual-military couples also rated their marriages very highly prior to the deployment and after return from the Persian Gulf. Fifty-five percent of this group gave their marriage the same rating at both time periods, 22% indicated a negative change, and 23% indicated a positive change in marital quality.

For civilian spouses there was a strong relationship between squadron support during the deployment and the marital quality index (Exhibit III-16). For three of the squadron support factors, if a respondent did not believe the squadron was supportive, they were significantly more likely to have a negative change in their marital quality than if they thought the squadron was supportive.

Number of years assigned to the current base was also important. Individuals assigned to the base two to four years had the least negative change, while people assigned five years or more had the most. Individuals assigned longer amounts of time to the same base may be more entrenched in their life styles and less used to extended deployments, may have had more difficulty

during the deployment. They may also be more likely to be in larger low-mobility units with fewer established family support mechanisms in place for deployments.

EXHIBIT III-16
CIVILIAN SPOUSE INDICATORS RELATED TO MARITAL QUALITY

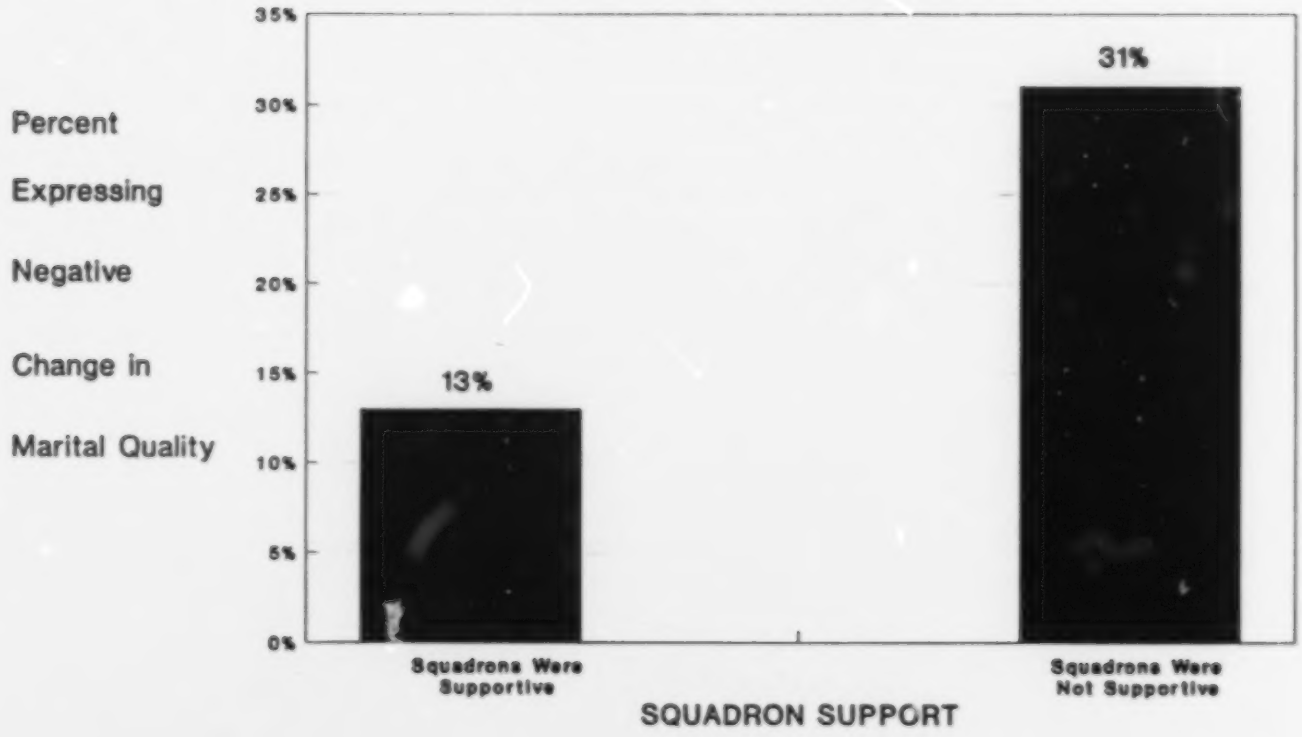
	Positive Change	No Change	Negative Change
Squadron leaders supportive of families			
Disagree	24%	45%	31%
Agree	30%	57%	13%
Encouraged bringing families to squadron events			
Disagree	24%	49%	27%
Agree	30%	57%	13%
Encouraged family support group			
Disagree	22%	54%	24%
Agree	31%	56%	13%
Number of years assigned to base			
1 Year or less	28%	54%	17%
2-4 years	29%	58%	12%
5 or more years	29%	46%	25%

Exhibit III-17, following this page, graphically displays the relationship between squadron support and marital quality. For those spouses who believed their squadrons were supportive, only 13% experienced a negative change in marital quality. In contrast, for those spouses who did not believe their squadrons were supportive, 31% experienced a negative change in marital quality.

The reunion period and the impact of the deployment on marital relationships was discussed in focus groups with spouses and active duty members, as well as in leadership interviews. Respondents agreed that the period of adjustment before "things got back to normal" varied from a few hours to several weeks or months. Most spouses said that the couples' roles and

EXHIBIT III-17

SPOUSES REPORTING SQUADRONS WERE SUPPORTIVE OF FAMILIES WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT NEGATIVE CHANGE IN THEIR MARRIAGE



responsibilities changed during the deployment, and during the reunion phase couples had to renegotiate who performed which tasks. For example, many young spouses who had never handled a checkbook before took on this responsibility during Desert Shield/Storm. When servicemembers returned, couples had to decide who would continue to perform this task.

Spouses said that one of the things they looked forward to when the servicemember returned home was getting a break from performing all household tasks. Spouses said they imagined being able to tell the servicemember that he had responsibility for the children, and the spouse could go out and do something on her own. One of the tough realities of the initial homecoming was that many servicemembers were not prepared to jump back into household responsibilities and wanted time to themselves to deal with their war experience. Some servicemembers came home quieter than they had been, or preferring different types of food than before the deployment. One first sergeant said that it had taken him about six weeks to feel like he was part of the family again.

As many focus group and interview respondents put it, "strong marriages got stronger and troubled marriages had more problems" after the deployment. Most leaders reported at least one or two divorces in their units after the deployment, but indicated that these were marriages that had problems before. Many more people pointed to the number of babies due in the early part of 1992 as evidence that the deployment experience had brought many couples closer together.

Some squadron leaders and Mental Health personnel indicated that there was a definite increase in alcohol abuse and domestic violence shortly after the reunion. Other service providers, however, said they did not notice any changes in these areas.

3.2 Impact of the Deployment on Child Relationships

All three respondent groups were asked to rate the overall quality of their relationships with their children in the six months prior to the deployment and

since the return of the servicemember from the Persian Gulf, using a ten point scale. All three groups indicated very positive relationships with their children at both points in time.

Civilian spouses indicated the greatest positive change in child relationship quality. Twenty-one percent of civilian spouses indicated a positive change in their relationships with their children, and only 9% indicated a negative change. The remaining 71% had no change between the two periods of time.

Dual-military couples showed positive change in child relationships for 15% of the respondents, negative change for 16% and no change for the remaining 71%. Single parents were the most likely to indicate a negative change in their relationship with their children (16%), and the least likely of the three groups to have no change in child relationships (66%). The remaining 18% of the respondents indicated a positive change in their relationships with their children.

For civilian spouses only one indicator was related to child relationship quality: the level of stress experienced over children during the deployment. Respondents who experienced high levels of child stress during deployment were almost twice as likely to indicate a positive change in the relationship with their children after the servicemembers return than were respondents who experienced low levels of child stress.

The quality of the relationships between single parents and their children was related to two indicators:

- o Receipt of pre-deployment briefing--those who received a briefing indicated more positive change (24%) than those who did not (14%)
- o Keeping informed about the children--parents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the level of information they received about their children were twice as likely to indicate a negative change in their relationships than parents who were satisfied or very satisfied.

Exhibit III-18, following this page, graphically portrays the relationship between satisfaction with information by single parents and the amount of negative change they experienced with their children. Of those single parents who were satisfied with the information they received, only 13% reported a negative change in their relationship with their children. On the other hand, 26% of single parents who were dissatisfied with information received reported a negative change in their relationship with their children. These findings, like others in the prior two sections, point out the importance of making sure servicemembers are prepared for deployment and that they are kept aware of their children's well-being.

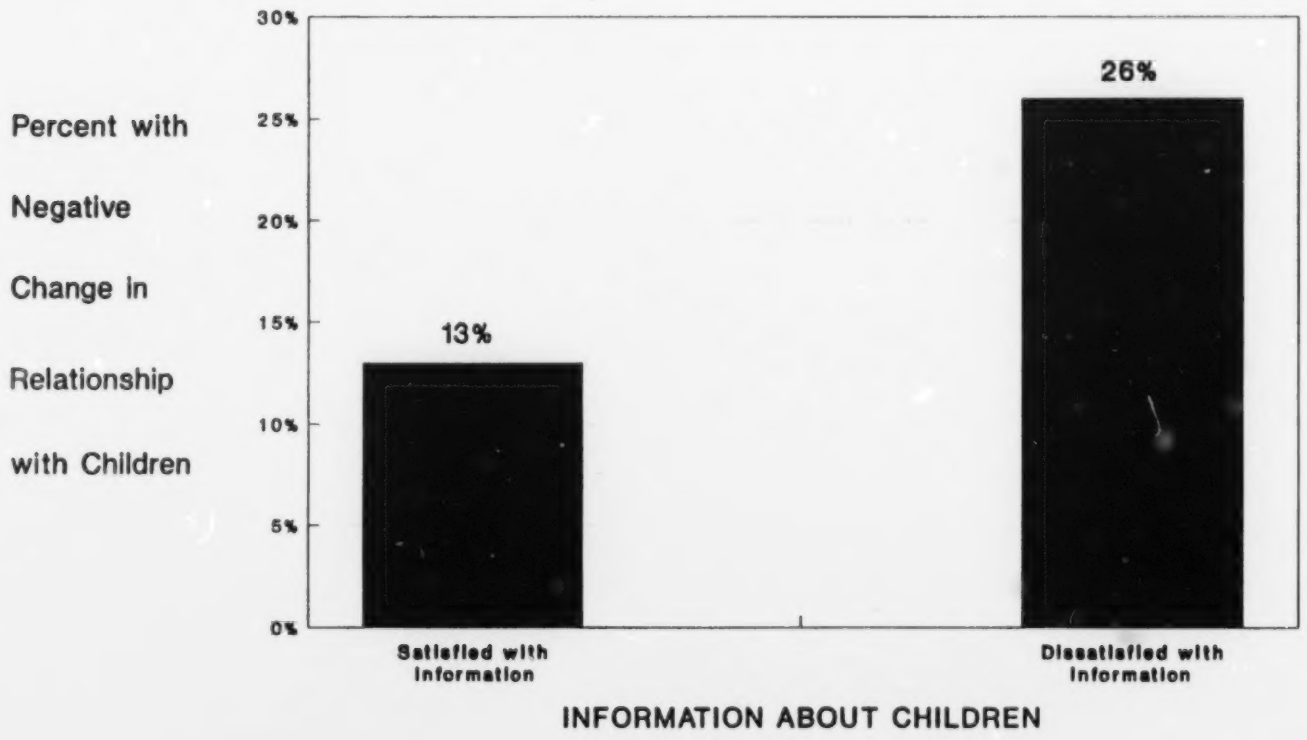
Relationships between children and their parents changed as a result of the deployment in several ways. Many servicemembers reported coming home and feeling like they had no parenting role in their households, because the spouse had been making all the decisions and the children had learned to go to the spouse rather than to the servicemember. Many youth said that they were scared and anxious before their parent came home because they did not know what to expect or how the servicemember parent may have changed. Youth also wanted respect for their new independence acquired as a result of the separation experience.

Single parents and dual-military couples encountered additional problems because their children had been living with caregivers for several months. Several parents reported persistent separation anxiety after their return. One couple who left a three-month-old baby came home to a ten-month-old child who did not know them. Once they re-established their relationship with their child, the child became very scared of separation from either parent and cried excessively when either of them left the room. Another single parent said that he became much closer to his son and more likely to do things his son wanted than he had been before the separation.

Older children said that they often resented the reunion between their parents and felt left out when the servicemember wanted to spend time alone with the spouse rather than the children. Many of these children said they were less dependent on their parents now than they had been prior to the deployment.

EXHIBIT III-18

SINGLE PARENTS SATISFIED WITH INFORMATION GIVEN ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT A NEGATIVE CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN



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3.3 Services Provided by the Air Force

While it was generally acknowledged that the reunion phase required families to make adjustments, it appears that the number of servicemembers and their families using services post-deployment is similar or slightly lower than prior to Desert Shield/Storm (see Exhibits III-12 and III-13). Since the data also indicate that families are still exhibiting higher levels of service needs than at pre-deployment (see Exhibits III-8 to III-10), it may be that families are not getting the services and support needed. This section describes the services provided and used at the FSC, other base agencies, schools, and squadrons.

Family Support Center

Based on the telephone interview data, 22% of spouses reported receiving services from the FSC following the War. This level of use represents approximately an 80% decrease in the use of FSC services compared to the Desert Shield/Storm period and is lower than the percentage of spouses using services prior to Desert Shield/Storm. The services primarily obtained by spouses during post-deployment and reunion were:

- Information and referral
- Post-deployment briefings.

At one base the Family Support Center offered marriage counseling and seminars on coping with stress in direct response to reunion problems. Another FSC Director and several family members reported that it was difficult for families to get affordable marriage counseling after the War, because no one agency was responsible for providing these services and the CHAMPUS costs were beyond the means of many young families. Based on the survey data, it does not appear that many spouses are using counseling services. It is somewhat surprising that a significant number of spouses did not utilize financial management services, despite FSC and leadership reports that some families were experiencing considerable financial problems after Desert Shield/Storm due to high telephone bills and other financial impacts of the War.

The reasons for the relatively low levels of use of services after the War are not entirely clear. It may be that: 1) most families did not feel they were experiencing problems and just wanted time alone, 2) families were reluctant to seek assistance, and 3) families did not know where to find the type of assistance needed.

Base Agencies

Based on discussions with various service providers, most agencies did not establish programs for the reunion period, with the exception of base-wide reunion celebration activities. Some reported that the War was over so quickly that they never had the opportunity to implement programs they had planned. Others said they simply did not see a demand. Only one of the service providers interviewed, a Mental Health Center representative, responded to the situation by providing brochures and programs addressing reunion adjustment, in addition to counseling services.

Twenty-five percent of the spouses interviewed reported using base agencies' services after Desert Shield/Storm (see Exhibit III-13). This percentage of spouses is almost equivalent to the percentage of spouses using base agencies prior to the war. The agencies primarily used by spouses during the reunion phase were chapel programs and the Mental Health Center.

One service issue mentioned by several service providers was concern about the manner in which reimbursement of child care costs was handled. Although Congress authorized funds for the reimbursement of additional child care costs incurred by military families during Desert Shield/Storm (referred to as the coupon program), the use of these funds was at the discretion of each military service, and in the Air Force, at the discretion of the MAJCOMs. Hence reimbursement was not available to all Air Force families. In some cases, the policies on acceptable costs were not clear or well known. For example, families who incurred additional private child care expenses out of their own pockets might not be eligible for reimbursement, whereas families who obtained a loan from Air Force Aid for CDC child care costs might be deemed eligible. Furthermore, where

reimbursement was available, all families were not aware of the program nor was sufficient time given to submit required documentation. Consequently, many families were not able to benefit from this program.

Schools

Because schools did not receive information in advance on the return of servicemembers, they were not prepared for the reunion phase. School personnel reported that older children had some difficulties adjusting to "losing new found responsibilities" and reintegrating fathers into the family. Children also expressed some disappointment that life returned to normal so quickly. School principals and counselors expressed interest in being better prepared in the future for reentry situations.

Squadrons

According to the commanders and first sergeants interviewed, some leaders discussed reunion problems with servicemembers prior to redeployment. Upon returning, leaders provided informal counseling to those servicemembers experiencing reunion problems. However, none of the leaders reported that post-deployment briefings were provided for spouses, although the leaders felt reunion briefings would have been helpful. Reunion celebrations involving servicemembers and their families were provided, as well as presentations of certificates, medals, and awards to servicemembers.

In the focus groups, both spouses and youth mentioned that the first servicemembers who returned home received a big celebration. Later-arriving servicemembers received smaller celebrations or none at all. Some families were upset by the difference in the show of support for returning servicemembers. For families stationed overseas, the distance made it difficult for them to feel a part of the U.S. celebrations. In addition, overseas families did not feel their participation in the War was recognized by the U.S. public. Active duty members expressed concern that non-deployed servicemembers did not receive any recognition for their efforts.

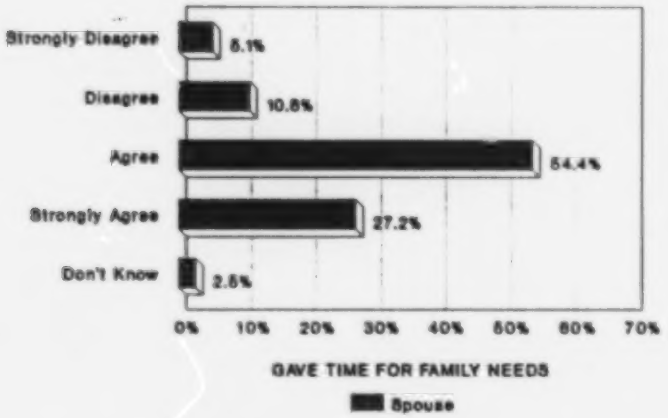
To examine perceptions about squadron leaders' efforts and support, spouses, single parents, and dual-military couples were asked four questions in the telephone interviews about whether their squadron leaders were supportive, had given time for family needs, had given important information to families, and were supportive of the continuation of the support groups (see Exhibits III-19 and III-20, following this page). Seventy-five percent of spouses, single parents and dual-military couples felt squadrons were supportive of families following the return of the servicemembers.

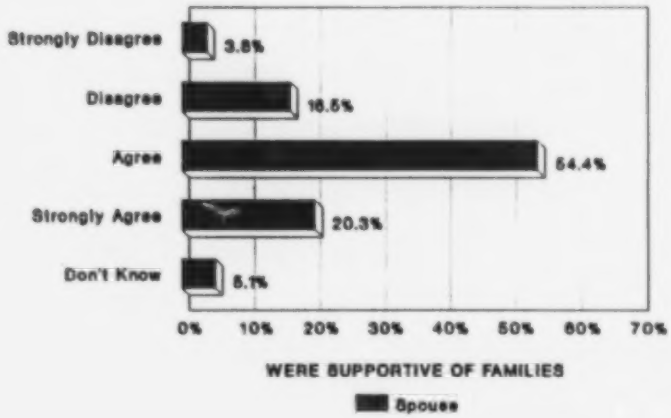
Eighty-two percent of spouses, 81% of single parents, and 75% of dual-military couples reported that servicemembers had been given time with their families after returning home. Interviews with squadron leaders confirmed that most gave their members leave of anywhere from two days to three weeks. Leaders also remarked that work loads were cut back in order to give servicemembers time to adjust. While those families which were given time together were greatly appreciative, members who were not provided leave were resentful. Furthermore, many airmen who had not been deployed were forced to work extra shifts, adding to the strain and resentment of those families.

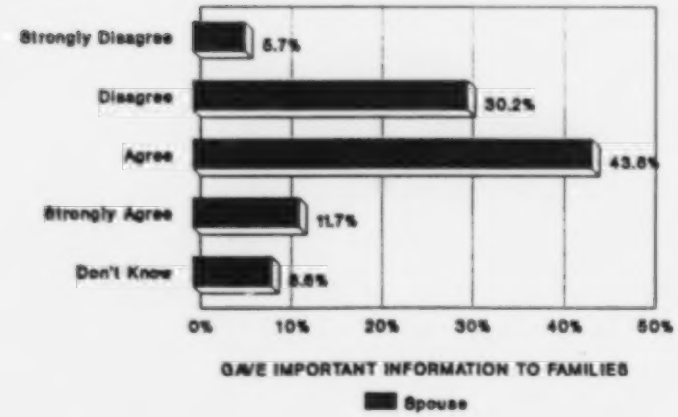
When asked whether important information had been given to families, only slightly more than half of the spouses, single parents, and dual-military couples agreed. Thus nearly 50% reported not having received information. This dissatisfaction may reflect the disappointment and anger about the lack of information on the return date(s) of the servicemembers. Since some servicemembers "had to find their own way home" via military hops rather than returning as a unit, squadron leaders were unable to confirm the whereabouts or expected date of the return of servicemembers. Spouses were upset and angry about this situation. While many families received notice of the arrival of servicemembers, this notice was often short and, in many cases, obtained via other military wives rather than from squadron leaders. As a result, some families were unable to plan homecomings.

Only 42% of the spouses interviewed felt the squadrons were supportive of the family support groups continuing. Although single parents and dual-military couples did not utilize support groups, 52% of single parents and 46% of dual-

EXHIBIT III-19
PRECEPTIONS OF SQUADRONS SUPPORTIVE EFFORTS AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM







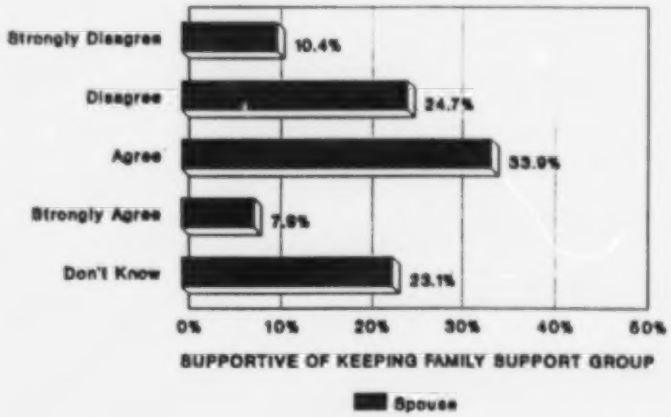


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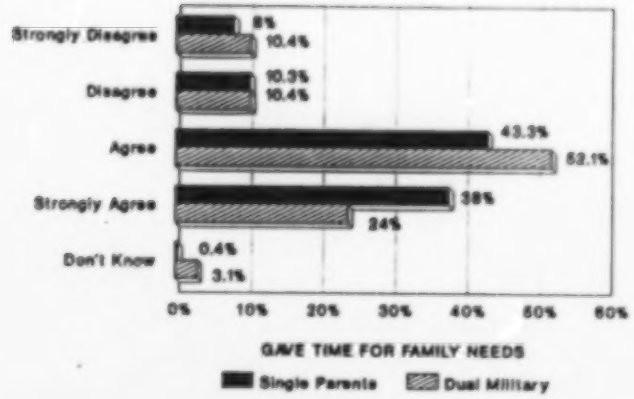
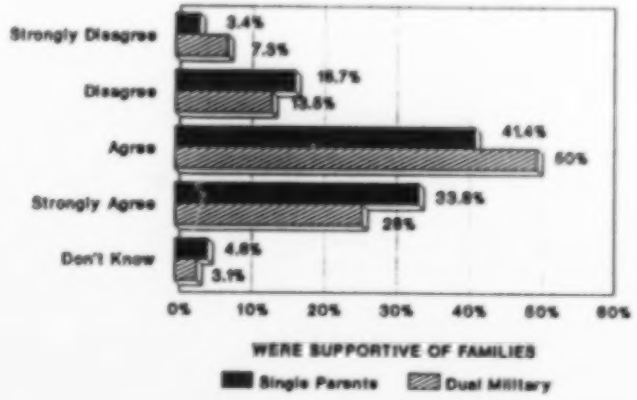
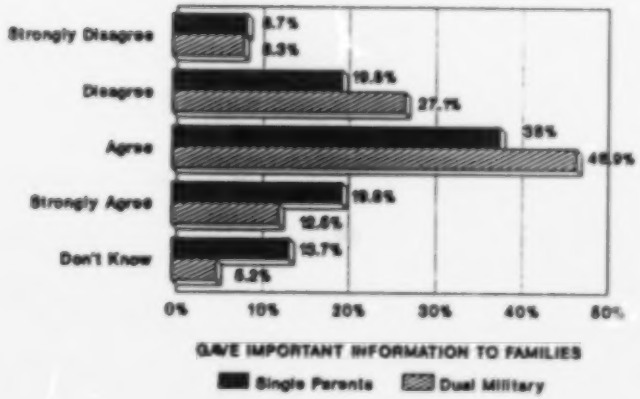
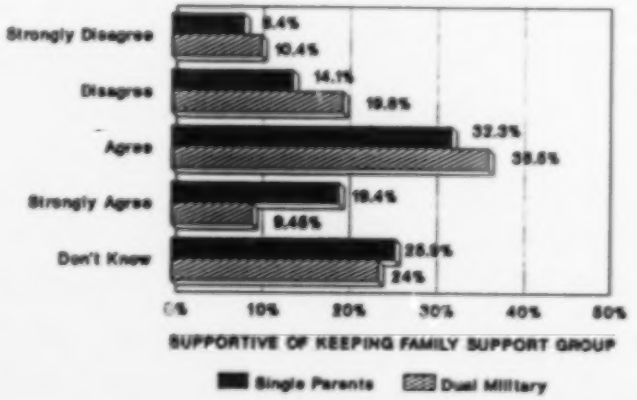
EXHIBIT III-20
PERCEPTIONS O SQUADRONS SUPPORTIVE EFFORTS AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM









III-59

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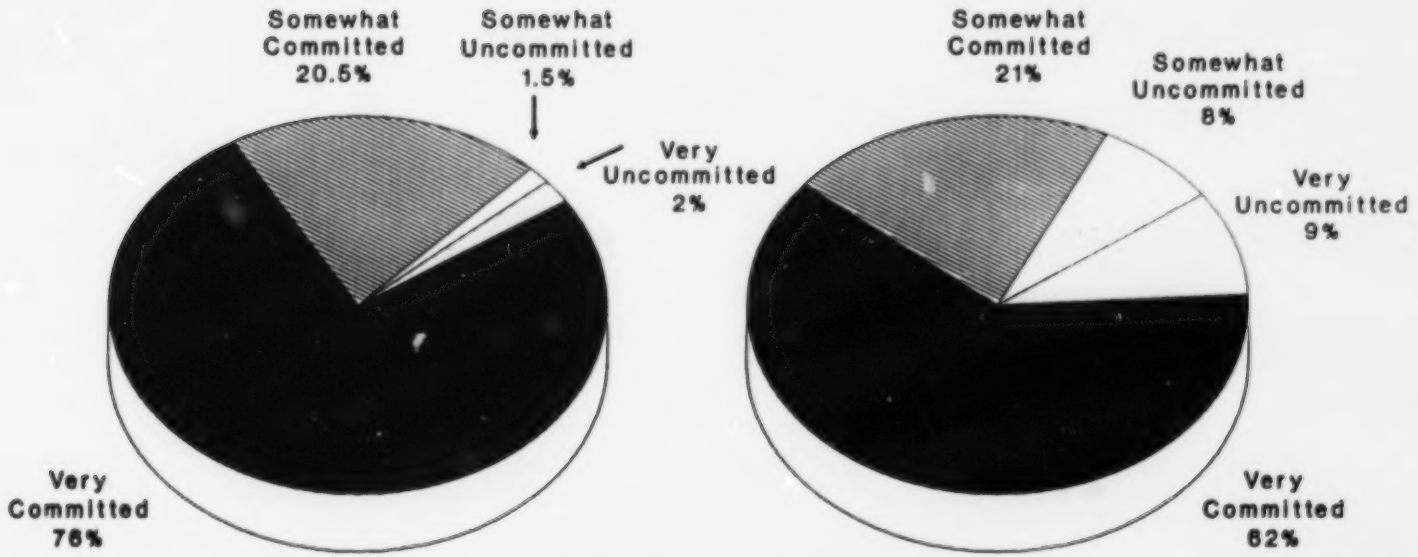
military couples believed their squadrons remained supportive of family support groups. A fourth of spouses, single parents, and dual-military couples were unsure about squadron support in this area. Given these findings, it would appear that spouses and active duty parents are not entirely clear where squadrons presently stand with regard to support groups. Given that support groups played a vital role during Desert Shield/Storm, there is a strong interest in having support groups available for future deployment situations.

3.4 Impact of the Deployment on Commitment to the Air Force

Single parents and dual-military couples were queried about the level of their commitment to the military prior to and after the deployment. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of commitment on a four point scale ranging from very uncommitted to very committed. As Exhibits III-21 and III-22, following this page, indicate the majority of respondents in both groups expressed a high level of commitment to the military; however, it is apparent that the deployment experience adversely impacted the commitment level of a significant number of respondents.

The percentage of single parents somewhat or very committed dropped from 97% to 83%, and the percentage somewhat or very uncommitted rose from 3% to 17%. Similarly, dual-military couples' commitment dropped from 94% to 80%, and those uncommitted rose from 6% to 20%. Exhibit III-23 indicates more precisely how many respondents indicated a change in level of commitment from pre-deployment to post-deployment. Twenty-six percent of single parents and almost 30% of dual-military couples indicated a lower level of commitment to the military following their deployment experience, while few expressed positive change.

EXHIBIT III-21
SINGLE PARENTS' COMMITMENT TO THE AIR FORCE



BEFORE DESERT SHIELD/STORM

AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM

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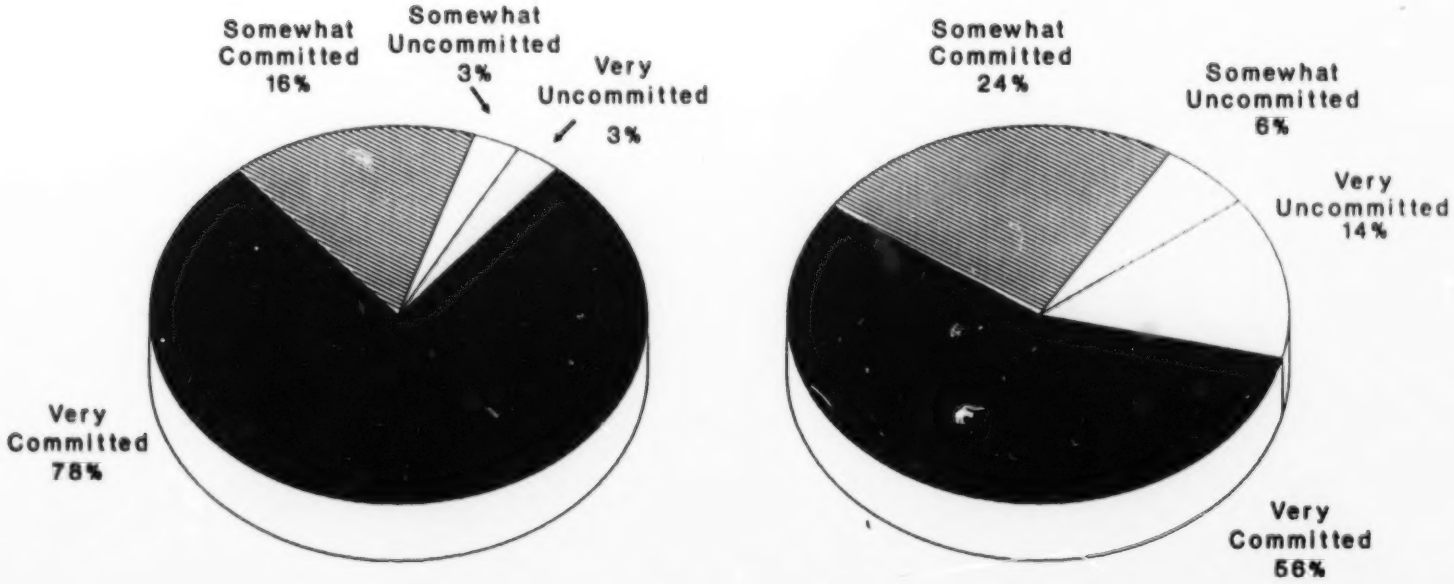
EXHIBIT III-22
DUAL MILITARY MEMBERS WITH CHILDREN
COMMITMENT TO THE AIR FORCE



BEFORE DESERT SHIELD/STORM

AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM

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EXHIBIT III-23 LEVEL OF CHANGE IN COMMITMENT		
	Single Parents	Dual Military
Positive change	6%	2%
Negative change	26%	30%
No change	68%	63%

Several factors are associated with a negative change in commitment for both single parents and dual-military couples:

- Sex--women were more likely than men to express a negative change in their commitment
- Age--younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to express a negative change
- Rank--junior-ranking enlisted respondents were more likely to express a negative change than senior enlisted respondents or officers
- Information about children--respondents who did not feel adequately informed about their children were more likely to express a negative change than were those who felt adequately informed; greater dissatisfaction was reported by respondents when ex-spouses were the caregiver than when grandparents were caregivers
- Stress about children--respondents who found missing their children and getting information about their children very stressful were more likely to express a negative change
- Briefings--respondents who did not receive a pre-deployment briefing were more likely to express a negative change
- Squadron support of families--respondents who felt that squadrons were not supportive of families during the deployment were more likely to express a negative change than were those who felt that squadrons were supportive of families.

An additional factor was important for single parents:

- o Number of previous deployments--respondents with no previous deployments were more likely to have a negative change than were those who had previous deployment experience.

Clearly these findings suggest that younger, less experienced servicemembers were more likely to report a decreased commitment. Exhibits III-24 through III-26, following this page, graphically depict the impact of the dependent variable on commitment to the military. In each case, where servicemembers believed they had received appropriate squadron support (III-24), information on children (III-25), or pre-deployment briefings (III-26), they were less likely to exhibit a negative change in commitment to the Air Force. Getting information, experiencing stress over the well-being of their children and communication with the caregiver; as well as getting a pre-deployment briefing and the support of squadron leaders during the deployment also affected servicemembers' commitment to the Air Force.

Civilian spouses were also asked to indicate their level of support for their spouse being in the military prior to and after the deployment, using the same scale presented above. As Exhibit III-27 (following Exhibit III-26) indicates, the vast majority of respondents expressed a high level of support for their spouse's service in the military, with minimal differences after the deployment. The percentage of spouses who were very or somewhat supportive dropped from 99% to 98%, and the percentage of very or somewhat unsupportive rose from 1% to 2%. Only 8% of spouses indicated a lower level of support and 3% indicated a higher level of support following the deployment experience.

Overall, it appears that the deployment experience had little impact on the attitude of respondents' towards their spouse's service in the military. These findings suggest that while spouses may have experienced increased needs, problems, stress and disruption in their lives during the deployment, the experience did not significantly alter their feelings about their spouse's service. The attitude of single and dual parents who were deployed to the Persian Gulf were more likely to have been negatively influenced by the deployment than were

EXHIBIT III-24

SERVICEMEMBERS REPORTING SQUADRONS WERE SUPPORTIVE OF FAMILIES WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT NEGATIVE CHANGE IN COMMITMENT

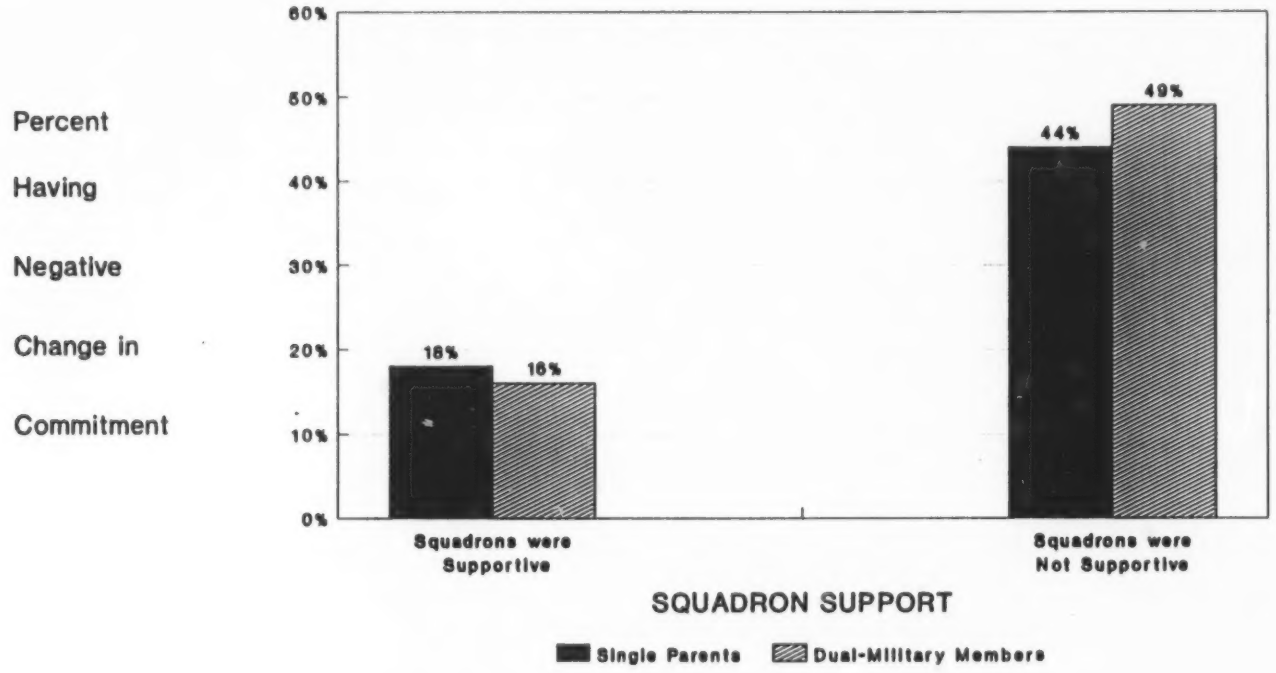

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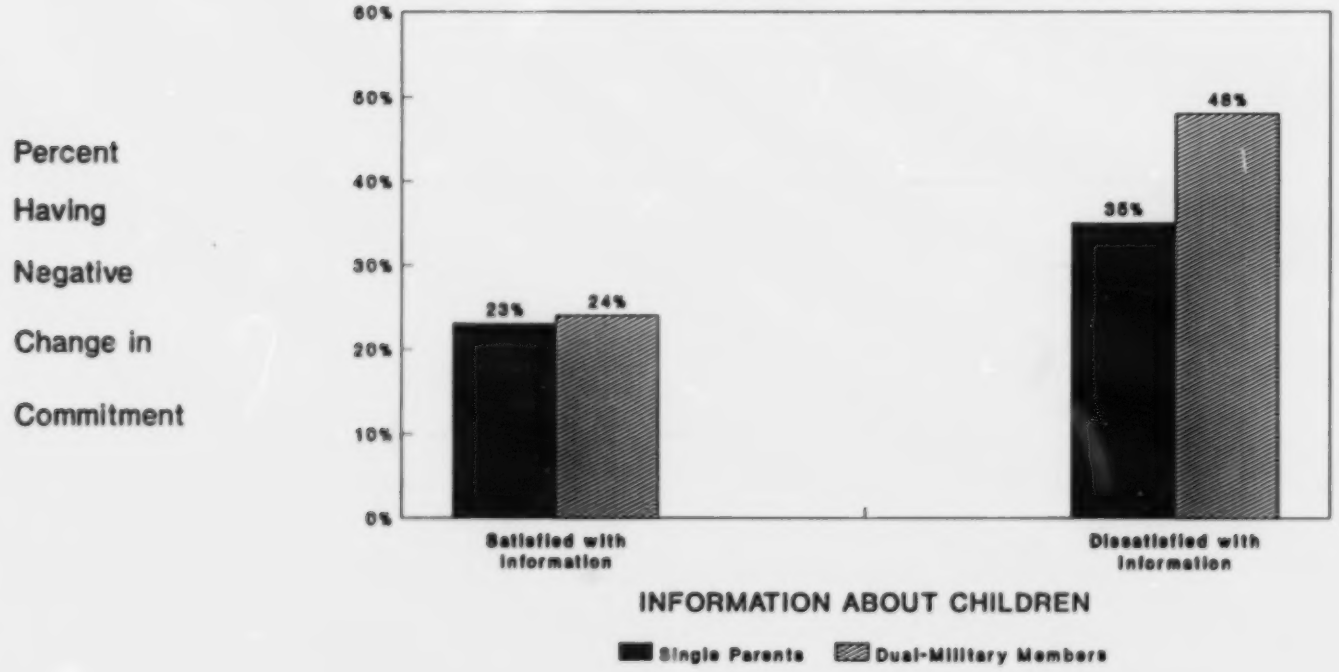
EXHIBIT III-25

SERVICEMEMBERS SATISFIED WITH INFORMATION GIVEN ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT A NEGATIVE CHANGE IN COMMITMENT



III-66

EXHIBIT III-26

SERVICEMEMBERS RECEIVING A PRE-DEPLOYMENT BRIEFING WERE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT A NEGATIVE CHANGE IN COMMITMENT

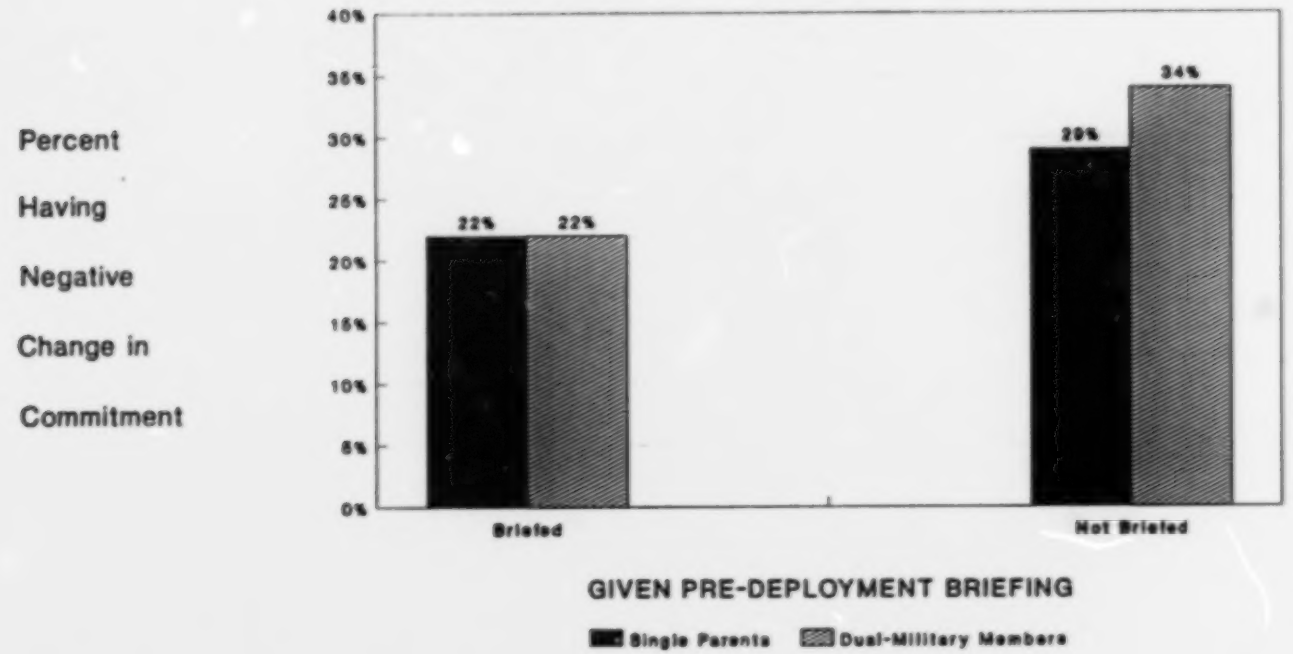


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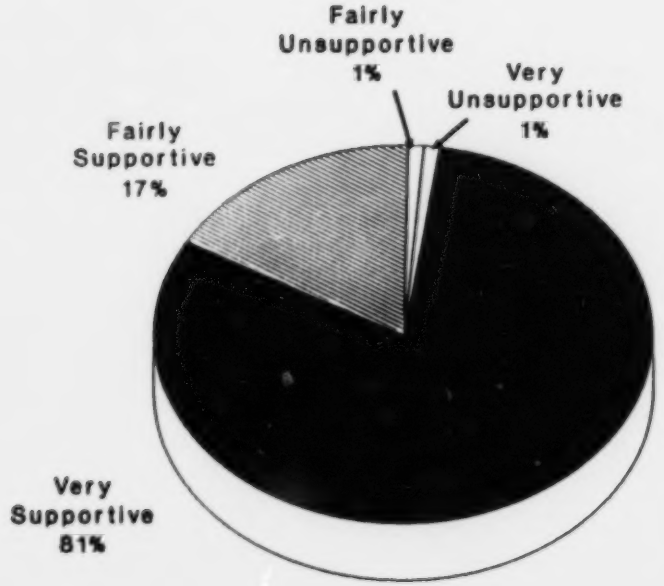
EXHIBIT III-27
SPOUSES' SUPPORTIVENESS OF THEIR SPOUSES BEING IN THE AIR FORCE



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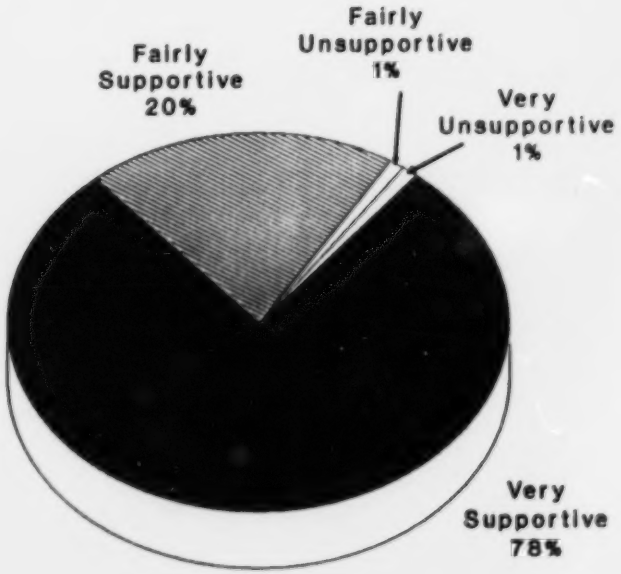

AFTER DESERT SHIELD/STORM

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the spouses who remained at home. For all three groups, the true level of negative change in commitment is undoubtedly higher than the study statistics indicate, since any airmen who left the Air Force between the end of the War and our interviews were excluded from the sample or became non-respondents.

These findings are supported by discussions in focus groups with spouses and active duty. Most of the participants were proud of their service or their spouse's service; but everyone knew people who were reconsidering their commitment or had already left. Many people entered the service in the last decade to get an education or training, and relatively few of them ever believed they would find themselves in combat situations. The feeling that "I never thought I would have to go to war", was an undercurrent in many of the interviews and focus groups. For single parents and dual-military couples the separation from their children was particularly difficult and may have caused many to rethink their retention intentions.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Persian Gulf War was the first, large-scale mobilization of U.S. troops since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973. It was, therefore, the first real test of the family support systems developed by the Air Force over the past decade. It is clear from the data collected that the Air Force's extensive investment in family support services paid off handsomely over the course of this deployment. By all accounts, the Family Support Centers, as well as the other community programs supporting families, were among the major success stories of the War.

At the same time, it is also clear that the Persian Gulf experience transformed military thinking about the role of family issues in military operations. Never before have family and combat issues been so inextricably linked. The role of television and the telephone brought the homefront and the battlefront into such close proximity that each affected the other with an alacrity that astonished many of the military leaders interviewed. If the Persian Gulf deployment is a harbinger of the future, then family readiness will be increasingly essential to military readiness.

Although most of the mechanisms needed to support families were ultimately provided, leaders at all levels -- from Congress to units to base agencies -- had to scramble to address needs as they emerged. Few had plans in place for this type of contingency; most indicated they had to "make it up as they went along." Air Force responsiveness was truly remarkable under the circumstances, but many improvements could be made to enhance delivery of the fast, consistent, and effective responses needed in a rapid deloyment.

This chapter summarizes the major conclusions to be drawn from the study findings presented in the previous chapter. It then identifies some of the key lessons learned and their implications for the Air Force. Specific suggestions are offered for strengthening deployment support systems to increase Air Force readiness in the event of future, large-scale mobilizations.

1. CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusions of the study are briefly summarized below, following the same organization used in the preceding chapter on findings:

- o Pre-deployment Preparation
- o Deployment Support
- o Reunion and Post-deployment Support.

1.1 Pre-deployment Preparation

Although most families were stunned by the suddenness of the mobilization and frightened by the spectre of war, most did a remarkable job of getting their affairs in order before the servicemember left -- often on a few days, or at best, a few weeks notice. There were a plethora of problems to contend with, however. Families of airmen with little or no previous experience with extended separations, as well as families associated with non-mobility units, had the most difficult time preparing. Many of them never believed they would have to face a deployment and simply did not know what to expect.

Key problem areas in preparing to leave included:

- o Straightening out finances and job/child care issues (for working spouses)
- o Arranging an appropriate power of attorney
- o Preparing or updating wills.

Approximately 13% of the spouses reported that their spouse's unit left before power of attorney was arranged; 16% left without wills; and 36% lacked the equivalent of two-weeks pay in available cash.

Most single parents and dual-military couples were emotionally well prepared for the deployment, and their supervisors reported very few problems with their readiness to mobilize. A significant minority had problems with their Family Care Plans which were more appropriate for short-term separations than an open-ended deployment. Roughly half sent their children over 150 miles away to live. Among the lower ranking enlisted, coming up with the cash for transporting their children to live with other family members was a major problem.

For all families, the uncertainty over the expected length of the deployment made planning difficult. Several families reported that they would have made different plans about their job, living arrangements, guardianship, child care, and a variety of other issues had they known the deployment would be for more than 90 days.

Many squadrons and base agencies were not fully prepared to assist families with pre-deployment planning, although most put forth extraordinary efforts to be helpful. JAG was particularly cited as having done an exceptional job on the mobility line assisting in the preparation of wills and powers of attorney. Less than 30% of spouses and 40% of single parents and dual-military couples reported receiving a pre-deployment briefing, mostly from their squadrons. The vast majority who did get briefings and/or briefing packets reported that they were helpful. In general, those who received these briefings were also much less likely to experience deployment problems and more likely to remain committed to the Air Force after the War.

Squadrons varied widely in their pre-deployment support for families, with high mobility units generally being better prepared. Most squadron commanders and first sergeants were learning as they went along and indicated that checklists, manuals and similar training tools would have made for a smoother transition effort. For some units, FSC's provided valuable assistance in these areas.

Assignment policies also varied widely from unit to unit and created difficulties for commanders. Some commanders deliberately avoided deploying single parents and both members of dual-military couples, while others made

assignments strictly based on mission requirements and performance. Commanders also differed over the appropriateness of assigning dual-military couples to the same location and on their perceptions of appropriate family reasons for keeping a servicemember from deploying.

1.2 Deployment Support

Once the servicemember actually deployed, the family was left to contend with managing the household and finances, finding support services, and getting accurate information about the spouse's situation in Saudi Arabia. Only 11% left the area to stay with family. Most families did exceptionally well and created little or no problems for the Air Force. A small number of families experienced many problems that required support and intervention from service providers and the squadrons. Young families or those experiencing their first deployment were much more likely to have problems, as were families living off base or from units traditionally "non-mobility". Key issues during the deployment included:

- o Changes exhibited by children
- o Communications with servicemembers
- o Financial problems
- o Unit support
- o Meeting service needs.

Changes Exhibited by Children

All children displayed some change in their behavior and/or mood; however, children of single parents and dual-military couples exhibited significantly more marked changes during the deployment, with many of these carrying over into the post-deployment phase. About half of the parents reported child concerns to be "very stressful." Reactions exhibited by younger children included nightmares, becoming more dependent, becoming more withdrawn and having problems at school. However, many children became more independent and took on additional responsibilities during the absence of the servicemember. Older children wanted

to know more about the deployment and how their parent was living, what kind of food they had to eat and where they slept. Many children imagined their parents living in pup tents until they saw videos of the living conditions sent back from the squadrons. Support groups at school also helped children to cope with their fears and anxieties.

Communications With Servicemembers

Communicating with the servicemember during the deployment created worries and anxieties for families, leadership and service providers. This was the first time in history that a family member could pick up a phone and call the servicemember in a war zone. Most servicemembers received at least 3 calls per month. Many people saw the ease of communication as a double-edged sword. On one hand, the frequent communications alleviated fears about the well-being of the servicemember and the family. On the other hand, it allowed the exchange of information about daily problems , which often increased stress levels for both members and spouses. Frequent calls generated rumors which ran rampant and often placed service providers and leaders in the position of having to defend their information to spouses who may have spoken to their husbands just hours before. Many leaders said that they spent a lot of time trying to dispel rumors and calm fears.

As easy as it was to make telephone calls, it was very difficult to get mail back and forth in a timely fashion. It often took three weeks or more for letters to reach servicemembers or families. This may have increased the number of phone calls made and certainly increased people's stress levels as they waited for mail. The overwhelming response to the Any Servicemember mail request only clogged the mail channels even further, making it difficult for active duty to receive mail from their families.

Videos were big morale boosters for troops and families. Many family members said that they felt much better about the servicemember's living conditions when they actually saw them on video. Similarly, servicemembers said that the videos were like having their families there and especially liked those

made by the squadrons at the base showing families participating in a picnic or dinner. It made them feel that the squadrons were being supportive and were helping to take care of their families in their absence. Almost 40% of spouses reported sending one or two videos per month.

Financial Problems

Financial issues created many problems for families. The loss of BAS, uncertainty over taxes and the time lag until supplemental pay began, combined to place many families in hardship situations. Servicemembers resented the fact that they experienced financial problems while they were serving their country in a war. In addition, the loss of income because active duty gave up second jobs or the spouse gave up a job because the servicemember could no longer provide child care made life difficult for families. Those spouses who continued to work or go to school often incurred large child care expenses. In some cases, the servicemember had been providing child care or had been taking the children to the Child Development Center on base. Without the servicemember, the spouse generally had to find child care in the civilian community, usually at higher rates.

Frequent telephone calls also created large bills for many families. Servicemembers often did not know how much their bills were until after they returned home.

Unit Support

Unit support varied widely by the type of unit and base, and by the number of servicemembers deployed from the unit. High mobility units were more likely to provide support to families through briefings, telephone chains, family support groups and activities for families. Less mobile units provided more sporadic support and were less likely to have family support groups. Guardians of children of single parents and dual-military couples received little, if any support and too often were uninformed about the eligibility of the children to use services or receive information.

Approximately one-half to two-thirds of respondents felt their squadron was generally supportive of families. Civilian spouses gave the highest ratings of support, followed by single parents and then dual-military couples. Young enlisted spouses were least likely to feel encouraged to participate in squadron events and support groups.

One of the support services received very favorably by families was the volunteer networks set up by units (and FSCs) to help families with household chores, such as mowing the lawn or changing a flat tire. Spouses found these networks very valuable; however, there was some abuse of the service. Leadership reported that on some occasions servicemembers would arrive at a house to mow the lawn only to find a teenager who was capable of performing the task, watching television. In some cases, spouses became too dependent on these services, creating problems for the units by calling for help for things they should have handled on their own.

Most leaders agreed that a very small percentage of spouses took up a great deal of leadership time. They indicated that some of these cases involved excessive dependency, while others involved serious family problems. Frequently these cases led to attempts to have the servicemember returned from overseas.

One issue that did not get enough attention during the deployment was the support for servicemembers who did not deploy. Active duty who did not deploy were often required to work extra shifts to get the mission accomplished at home. These servicemembers received little support or recognition for their efforts. Their families often felt short changed since they were under a great deal of stress as well, but were receiving relatively little support from the base or unit.

Overall, leaders wanted to learn from this experience to be better prepared the next time a deployment such as this occurs. Many leaders expressed an interest in having pre-packaged materials available describing: how to set up telephone chains and family support groups, what types of services are most needed, and where to refer people when they need assistance. Most leaders felt

that the squadron could have done a better job of supporting families, but that they did the best they could under the circumstances.

Meeting Service Needs

Almost everyone felt that the base agencies and especially the Family Support Center did a superb job and provided critical support to families. Without exception, leaders described the FSC as an extremely valuable resource to everyone on the base.

Other base agencies also received plaudits from leaders and family members. Mental Health provided counseling services to youth and parents as well as worked with schools at some locations. The programs provided by the Chapel were very highly regarded. The Chapel organized dinners, special deployment services, offered free babysitting and set up a volunteer network to assist with household chores. One of the areas chaplains felt they were lacking in was sufficient training in grief therapy and services they might have had to provide if there had been large numbers of casualties.

The Red Cross played a critical role during the deployment. They were instrumental in assisting families in getting a servicemember home on emergency leave or early return if necessary, and in helping commanders assess the seriousness of reported family health problems. They also served as a liaison to squadrons since Red Cross staff were present in Saudi Arabia.

The Child Development Center provided free child care for special events which was very helpful to spouses, especially around the holiday season. However, more child care was greatly needed. The CDC could not handle the numbers of people who needed child care, on either a drop-in basis or for full daycare. Child Development Directors said they needed more training in identifying and dealing with behavioral changes in children.

The Youth Activities Directors had a similar request, they wanted more training on deployment issues so they could be better prepared to meet the needs of the youth. As one Youth Activities Director put it, "I have a degree in recreation, I don't know the right things to do in this situation". Many YA programs held special events for children of deployed servicemembers, such as writing letters and cards, and making videos to send overseas.

Schools played an important role in providing support to youth and most did a good job. Many schools had support groups and conducted activities for children of deployed servicemembers. One criticism heard was that some schools that tried to provide support groups lacked qualified facilitators, and the discussion of some topics actually contributed to the stress levels of children. Public schools farther from bases were also reported to be much less supportive.

1.3 Reunion and Post-Deployment Support

When the servicemember returned, there were numerous issues to contend with, although these received much less attention than pre-deployment and deployment concerns. Key areas of concern include:

- Marital quality
- Relationships with children
- Services provided by the Air Force
- Commitment to the Air Force.

Most focus group participants agreed that their families went through an adjustment period lasting from few hours to several months. Strong marriages reportedly got stronger, but troubled marriages were apt to deteriorate. For both civilian spouses, 84% reported no change or an improvement in marital quality after the deployment period; while 17% reported negative changes. Dual-military couples were slightly more likely to report negative changes.

The support provided by squadrons had a major impact on marital quality for civilian spouses. Spouses who felt they were not supported by their squadrons during the deployment were twice as likely to indicate lower marital quality after the deployment.

Air Force family support also played a role in the quality of relationships with children for single parents. Single parents who received pre-deployment briefings and those who received adequate information about their children were less likely to report negative changes in their relationship with their children after the deployment. It is likely that single parents who received pre-deployment briefings were better able to plan and to make the guardian aware of support services available to children during the absence of the parent.

Relatively few services were provided to families after the deployment. Some leaders said that they gave reunion briefings in Saudi Arabia to servicemembers; however, no one reported giving formal briefings to families. Two areas of concern to families were the inequities in homecoming celebrations and amount of time off a servicemember was granted upon return. Some servicemembers received huge homecoming celebrations, while others who came home later often got very little. Additionally, some active duty were given several days or weeks off upon return, while others were expected to return to work within a day or so. These inequities made some spouses feel that the Air Force and their squadrons were not supportive of families or the servicemember. Several participants expressed a need for affordable marital counseling and reliable information on what to expect during reunions.

Both single parents' and dual-military couples' commitment to the Air Force were affected by the deployment experience. While the commitment of many of these servicemembers did not change, a significant number indicated their commitment had dropped after the deployment. Two factors determined this outcome: pre-deployment briefings and squadron support. Servicemembers who received pre-deployment briefings and believed that squadrons were supportive of them and their children were less likely to indicate a negative change in commitment to the Air Force. These findings underscore the importance of

preparing people for the experience and being supportive of families during deployments. Focus group participants said that many people were rethinking their career interests in light of this experience and some were choosing family and personal concerns over the Air Force.

2. IMPLICATIONS

The many lessons learned from the Persian Gulf experience provide an exceptional opportunity for the Air Force and the Department of Defense to strengthen family readiness for future deployments. This final section identifies the implications of the study findings for future policy, program development and training. The implications are presented in four sections, targeted to different audiences:

- Policy-makers
- Air Force unit leadership
- Family Support Centers
- Other Air Force service providers.

2.1 Policy Implications

Many issues identified during the course of this study were driven by statute or policy and therefore can only be addressed at the policy-making levels of the Air Force, OSD, and the Congress. In fact, many of these issues have already been the subject of legislation. Other issues could be addressed at lower command levels (MAJCOM, Base, or squadron), but would be better served by consistent, Air Force-wide policy. Six categories of implications are presented:

- Pay and benefits
- Assignment policies
- Screening and early return policies

- o Counseling services for family members
- o Family Care Plans
- o Mail.

Pay and Benefits

Servicemembers and family members expressed concern that they not suffer financially because of an extended military deployment. Four issues of concern were identified.

Supplemental pay

A detailed analysis should be conducted of the net financial impact of BAS losses, family separation pay, and hazardous fire pay on families in different ranks/tax brackets. Appropriate adjustments should be made to ensure fairness. Families should be educated routinely as to the purpose of these supplemental pays, the amounts involved, and the conditions under which they are paid.

Child transportation

It is probably not realistic to expect that most lower-ranking enlisted will have the funds set aside to cover transportation expenses required to implement Family Care Plans -- either to transport their children, or, especially for very young children, to transport a guardian to pick them up or stay with them. Consideration should be given to covering this expense (perhaps up to some limit or on a sliding scale) and/or ensuring the availability of loans for this purpose.

Child care expenses

Many families incurred extra child care expenses as a result of the extended separation, either for respite care or because of necessary changes in working hours or child care arrangements. There was little consistency, however, in the

extent to which these expenses were covered by the Air Force, either through public funds or local fundraising activities. A clear policy is needed spelling out when and under what conditions public funds should be used to defray extra child care expenses caused by deployment separations. Guidance on use of loans and local fundraising for this purpose would also be helpful.

Telephone expenses

A policy should be considered that permits servicemembers to make a specified number of calls home at government expense (e.g., forty minutes of calls per month). Many corporations have similar policies for routine business trips. In addition, DoD might explore options for regulating the level of phone use through pre-paid phone cards or other mechanisms.

Assignment Policies

A key assignment issue is the appropriateness of giving special preference to single parents and dual-military couples with children. Most of the leaders and servicemembers interviewed would support DoD's position that these servicemembers should not be excluded from serving in a combat zone, and that mission, not marital status, should be the primary determinant of assignments. In practice, however, many commanders clearly made every effort to avoid deploying single parents and both members of dual-military couples, often citing concern (and in some cases perceived policy) about creating orphans. Sometimes these decisions were made over the objections of the servicemember. Clearer guidance on the use of commander's discretion in these cases would benefit both unit leaders and the affected servicemembers.

A second issue was the assignment of both members of a dual-military couple to the same location. This issue drew sharply divided opinions among both leaders and dual-military couples. Again, clearer guidance on the appropriate exercise of discretion would be helpful.

Screening and Early Return Policies

Clearer guidance is needed for commanders and medical personnel on the factors that should preclude deployment or justify an early return, especially for family reasons, during a deployment. More efficient review systems are needed pre-deployment to avoid the need for early returns. Families should be routinely educated about the criteria used.

Counseling Services for Family Members

Mental Health is the only base agency authorized to provide psychological counseling services, but they are not manned to serve family members. Even in unusual circumstances when the service is available, many families are apprehensive about going to Mental Health for fear of jeopardizing the servicemember's career. Counseling services were provided to many families during Desert Storm/Shield in response to the crisis, but limited help was available to help families deal with the post-war adjustments. Policies are needed which ensure the availability of affordable, professional counseling services to help family members cope with the effects of deployment separations and reunions. Options which might be explored are: 1) assigning Reservists with counseling expertise to FSCs or Mental Health, 2) utilizing contracted civilian providers , or 3) utilizing VA services, especially post-deployment.

Family Care Plans

Family Care Plans need to be updated and inspected more regularly to ensure that plans for the care of dependents are realistic and can be implemented on short-notice. Intended guardians/caregivers should be notified periodically and informed of their responsibilities and the benefits available to them in the event of deployment. The Services should also consider making wills mandatory for all servicemembers. DoD is currently issuing a revised Instruction on these Plans.

Mail

Because of the important role of family mail in maintaining morale, many commanders suggested that family mail should receive greater priority in future deployments. Appropriate plans could be made to separate family mail for servicemembers and ensure adequate air transport capability for timely delivery.

2.2. Implications For Command Leadership

One of the clearest lessons to emerge from this study was the interdependence of families and units during deployments. Families clearly depend primarily on their units for the information and support they need. At the same time, unit morale and performance, at home and on the front, was heavily affected by family concerns. Furthermore, family issues received heavy media exposure and were closely linked to public support for the war effort.

Numerous approaches were identified over the course of the study that could benefit both unit leadership and families in future deployments. One key approach would be to have every unit establish a mobilization plan which details procedures to support families and ensure their readiness. The resource materials and training described in the following sections would assist units in preparing and implementing these plans.

Training and Materials

Training materials and tools should be developed that incorporate the lessons learned from Desert Storm/Shield to help commanders and first sergeants in future deployments. These materials, accompanied by appropriate training, would ensure more consistent and effective family support, more trouble-free mobilizations, and reduced early returns and drains on command time. Materials should address such topics as:

- Pre-deployment checklists

- o Model pre-deployment briefings
- o Management of family issues at the deployed site
- o Management of family issues at the home base
- o Organization of successful family support groups, including youth groups
- o Management of communications with families, including on- and off-base spouses and youth and out-of-area guardians and relatives
- o Use of family leave, pre- and post-deployment
- o Organization of volunteer helping networks and promotion of self-help skills for spouses
- o Management of morale for non-deployed airmen and their families
- o Effective use of help from FSCs and other base agencies.

Notification of Deployment Length

One lesson learned from this experience is the importance of preparing families adequately for open-ended assignments. Commands must aggressively manage all statements and even orders to ensure that they convey the correct message to families about the potential length of the assignment. All parties agreed that much heartache and hassle probably could have been avoided if families were led to expect longer or open-ended assignments.

Mobilization Training and Drills

Several squadron commanders and first sergeants suggested that future unit mobilization exercises should include a complete, simulated test of family readiness. Family briefings should be held, powers of attorney and wills prepared, guardians notified and their preparedness confirmed, emergency cash obtained, medical screenings performed, etc., so that units and families will be much better prepared to deploy on short notice.

Orientations for New Marrieds

Leadership and family members agreed that it is extremely important for the Air Force to find ways to orient new families (both the servicemember and his or her spouse) to the realities of Air Force life and the skills necessary to survive deployment separations successfully. These orientations should: alert families to the possibility of deployment regardless of career field, explain deployment preparation procedures and requirements for families, explain the independent living skills needed by spouses during deployments, and explain the key support systems available to them on base in case of a deployment. These orientations should be mandatory for servicemembers and very strongly encouraged for spouses as soon as possible after marriage. A video presentation would enhance the impact of the message and make it easier to reach all newly married couples.

Recruiting

A final suggestion related to setting expectations was that the Air Force ensure that recruiters make it clear that anyone in the Service could be deployed to a war zone, regardless of their occupational speciality, and ensure that recruits understand and accept that risk when they commit to the Air Force.

2.3 Implications for Family Support Centers

FSCs responded to the Persian Gulf crisis with a wide variety of creative, and often highly-regarded programs and strategies. The most effective approaches should be documented so that they can be shared throughout the Air Force and used to strengthen future services. Manuals, materials, and training are needed in five areas:

- Enhancing FSC I & R and direct services--including crisis line operations; briefings and educational sessions for families pre-, during, and post-deployment; financial counseling; and volunteer management

- Enhancing FSC command and agency consultation--including strategies for working most effectively with the base commander and unit commanders and first sergeants to meet their needs (e.g., supplying checklists and model family briefings), and working with each of the base agencies to develop collaborative or mutually reinforcing programs and information

- Tips for family members--FSC's need to have handy a variety of easy-to-read materials targeted to the special needs of different family members at different stages of the deployment including spouses, children of different ages, guardians, and parents of servicemembers

- Handling mass casualties--guidance is needed for service providers in addressing the emotional and instrumental needs of all family members whose spouse, parent, or child have been killed or seriously wounded

- Managing local community assistance--strategies for soliciting donations, services and assistance from community businesses and organizations and using them effectively.

2.4 Implications for Other Base Agencies

Most all of the Air Force human services agencies were involved in helping to meet family needs in one way or another. Many were inventing and learning as they went along, and their experiences should help to better define the wartime role of these agencies in meeting family needs. Implications for policy, training, and programming for the different agencies are briefly discussed below, based on the comments received at the three sites.

Chapel, Child Development, and Youth Activities/MWR

For each of these agencies, user evaluations were generally very favorable. The primary concern expressed was for more services, especially child care and activities for youth. Directors of these agencies expressed two needs:

- o Program manuals, describing the types of special programs and services that should or could be offered
- o Training on responding to the needs of family members, particularly in the event of mass casualties.

Youth activities could potentially play a wider role on the bases in facilitating support for youth needs.

Mental Health

Since Mental Health staff, with the exception of Family Advocacy Program staff, do not usually work with family members, these programs found themselves thrust into a potentially new role during the deployment with many servicemembers gone and many potential counseling needs among spouses and children. While relatively few family members needed professional counseling, as opposed to less formal information and support, the Mental Health staff and other service providers identified several steps that would enable Mental Health to play a larger and more effective role in support of families in future deployments. These include:

- o Developing clearer Air Force guidance on returning airmen because of family crises
- o Developing guidance and resource manuals addressing Mental Health's family support role during deployments. Topics to be covered include:
  - Manning
  - Counseling for children of different ages
  - Grief therapy
  - Working with schools, Youth Activities, CDC, FSCs and other family agencies
  - Reunion counseling
  - Working with squadron family support groups.

DODDS

School staff interviewed also indicated a desire to be better prepared to address needs during deployments. If a resource/program manual were prepared for DOD Dependent Schools use, it could also be distributed to other public schools serving children of servicemembers. Issues to be addressed in a manual should include:

- o Coordinating with command and base agency personnel
- o Identifying children with serious problems
- o Preparing youth for reunion adjustments
- o Counseling issues
- o Special support groups and activities
- o Sensitizing staff.

JAG and Finance

A common concern of study participants was the confusion over the use of the power of attorney. It would be helpful if Air Force Legal and Finance policy staff could clarify the rights of spouses to make different types of financial transactions with limited or general powers of attorney. An easy to understand pamphlet could then be prepared to distribute to families when needed. Similarly, it would also be helpful to have simple handouts for spouses explaining Leave and Earnings Statements, as well as BAS and other supplemental pay (Finance) and wills (Legal).

Air Force Aid Society (AFAS)

Air Force Aid was praised as being responsive and quick to adjust to needs as they arose during the Persian Gulf Crisis. Some respondents suggested that based on the Desert Storm/Shield experience, AFAS clarify its policies on

deployment-related expenses that qualify for loans in order to be better prepared for quick processing during future deployments.

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that many valuable lessons have been learned from the Persian Gulf War. This last section has outlined some of the efforts needed in the areas of policy, training, and program development. A general theme that emerges is the need for contingency plans to support families and family readiness during mobilizations. Such plans, at the policy and operational level, would both benefit families and lead to smoother, more efficient military operations. They would simplify the jobs of commanders and agency directors, clarify expectations for families, and promote greater consistency in support and benefits across bases and units.

Another lesson learned concerns the importance of coordinating family response plans and efforts at the base level. Family Support Centers provided invaluable support to unit leadership and other agencies, as well as to families. The FSC role as the focal point for family support efforts during mobilizations should be clarified and institutionalized.